

Social Media, Hate Speech and the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: The Case of Some Selected Posts and Comments on *Facebook* by Cameroonians

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Abstract

Since the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis in 2016, media professionals and ordinary people in Cameroon have been constantly producing hate speech via all forms of media, especially the social media platform called Facebook. This is believed to have far reaching consequences on the targeted individuals, groups and on national unity at large. This paper investigates how hate speech is represented in some posts and comments by Cameroonians on Facebook during Anglophone crisis. Data was gotten from some popular Facebook 'groups', 'pages' and the 'personal walls' of some Cameroonian activists. The paper reveals that hate speech for the most part on Facebook during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is based on ethno-political groupings, represented through the use of inclusive/non-inclusive pronouns, and words and expressions that excite hatred such as terrorists, Ambafools/Ambafrogs; Anglofou/Anglofools; Graffi; Cam no go; Bamileke Marquissard; La Republic/LRC; Francofools; and CPDM monsters. These words and expressions are further intensified through the use of deictic expressions and several demeaning adjectives, metaphors and similes. To solve this problem, the paper proposes some alternative words and expressions that can be used by Cameroonians both online and offline to reduce the rate of hate speech in Cameroon. The paper firmly holds that if work is done for the social and cultural transformation of all the people of Cameroon, then the usage of hate speech in Cameroon during and after the Anglophone crisis will be reduced.

Keywords: Hate speech, Facebook, CDA, ethno-political groupings, the Anglophone crisis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon has animated the socio-political landscape of the country since independence and reunification in 1961. The disturbing situation in Cameroon began during the country's colonial era. Before 1916, Cameroon was under German rule since 1884. German rule in Cameroon lasted for about 30 years (1884 to 1916). The Anglo-French forces jointly defeated the Germans in Cameroon in 1916 following the outbreak of World War I. The colony was subsequently partitioned unequally between Britain and France in the ratio 1:4 in favour of the latter (Fanso 1999). The resultant effect was the implementation of two distinct colonial policies in the two parts of the country that lasted some 45 years. Apart from linguistic differences that made the two sections different, Anglophone Cameroon for over 45 years adopted the British culture while French Cameroon on her part adopted the French language and culture as well. Such differences in colonial legacies have made some scholars to think that the two parts of

the country are distinct and that national unity and integration remains an illusion in Cameroon (Fanso, 1999).

In order to ensure the integrity and stability of the nation, the two sections accepted to form a Federal System of Government in 1961, when the former British part of the country voted in the UN organized plebiscite of the same year to join French Cameroon which had earlier gotten independence in 1960. The Federal System was later abolished in 1972 by Ahidjo in favour of a Unitary State, and a new nation was rechristened 'The United Republic of Cameroon'. This lasted only for about a decade as the new president, Paul Biya, dropped 'United' from the appellation in 1984 (Fanso, 1999) leading to the current appellation 'The Republic of Cameroon'. The period between 1961 and 1990 was characterized by 'political stability' under the one-party system instituted earlier in 1966 by Ahidjo. However, this was simply a period of silence, which did not necessarily mean the two parts of

Cameroon were entirely united as (Fanso, op cite) thinks.

The period between 1966 and 1990 was a period of relatively no political opposition as a result of the one-party system instituted by Ahidjo in 1966. Besides, it was not until early 1990s when President Paul Biya was going to guarantee Cameroonians the so desired right that was sweeping across most African countries at the time. Law N° 90/52 of 19th December 1990 came as a beacon of hope for Cameroonians who for over thirty years had been subjected to suppression under a One Party State without the freedom to express themselves. This law, commonly called known as 'Liberty Law', liberalized the Cameroon media landscape and political arena giving Cameroonians the freedom to speak and oppose. The resultant effect was the proliferation of media organs, and political plurality thereafter. Between 1990 and 1995 Cameroon had about 50 independent newspapers that were highly solicited. It was within this framework that Anglophone elite and opinion leaders sought through the launching of newspapers, political parties, civil society organizations and trade unions to make known their accumulated grievances against the regime (Eko, 2003, p. 87).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social media platforms have the potential of contributing to democratization processes same as they are effective tools for intensifying existing conflicts among people of the same or different ethnic groups (Haziran, 2014). It has been observed that during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon which has lasted for close to a decade now, media professionals and ordinary people in Cameroon constantly produce hate speech via all forms of media, especially the social media platform called *Facebook*. The hate speech produced by these *Facebook* users through the language they use in their *Facebook* posts and comments is believed by many to have far reaching consequences on the targeted individuals, groups and the country at large.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To investigate the problem at stake, some questions have been raised.

The main research question is:

How is hate speech represented in *Facebook* posts and comments by Cameroonians during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?

The main research has been broken down as follows:

1. What are some words and expressions of hate speech used in *Facebook* posts and comments by Cameroonians during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?

2. Why do Cameroonians make use of hate speech in their *Facebook* posts and comments during the Anglophone crisis?
3. How can the use of hate speech by Cameroonians on *Facebook* be reduced?

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper aims at investigating how hate speech is represented on *Facebook* by Cameroonians during Anglophone crisis.

Specifically, the paper aims at:

1. To identify words and expressions patterning to hate speech discourse in *Facebook* posts and comments by Cameroonians during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.
2. To find reasons why Cameroonians make use words and expressions of hate speech in their *Facebook* posts and comments during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.
3. To propose alternative words and expressions that can be used by Cameroonians to reduce the rate of hate speech both online and offline during this Anglophone crisis.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on hate speech has gained considerable attention in recent years due to the rising tensions among individuals and groups. According to DW Hate Speech FAQ [¹], hate speech is "...a communication that denigrates people on the basis of their membership of a particular group. This can include any form of expression such as images, plays, and songs, as well as speech..." To them, other definitions extend the concept of hate speech to include "...communications that foster a climate of prejudice and intolerance these kinds of communications may fuel discrimination, hostility and violent attacks later on."

According to Cohen-Almagor, (2013: 43), hate speech is defined as a bias-motivated, hostile, malicious speech aimed at a person or a group of people because of some of their actual or perceived innate characteristics. It expresses discriminatory, intimidating, disapproving, antagonistic, and/or prejudicial attitudes toward those characteristics, which include gender, race, religion, ethnicity, colour, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation. Hate speech is aimed to injure, dehumanize, harass, intimidate, debase, degrade, and victimize the targeted groups and victims.

On the other hand, Haziran (2014) states that hate speech do more than represent violence. To the author, it actually represents an individual or 'small/big group' of people who use verbal or symbolic violence. By this, words should not be regarded as simply words

¹SDW Hate Speech FAQ <https://p.dw.com/p/1I9ku>

in themselves; instead they should be taken as speech acts; doing something and having some harmful effects. The study further goes to say that, the effects are instigated and felt by those who use it. And those utterances are not only references but also the outcomes of nationalistic, racist, sexist mind-sets. In other words, hate speech cannot be separated from its specific social and cultural contexts. It is believed that the concept of 'hate speech' should be extended to 'hate discourse' in the era of social media.

Haziran also likens hate speech or hate discourse to John L Austin's theory of speech Act. Thereby saying; to utter words is not just to "say" something, what he calls "locutions" but rather to perform a certain kind of action, that is, to act with speech. From Austen's point of view, language is not only referential or informative but also performative. John L Austin (1978) concludes by elucidating that the effects of illocutionary and perlocutionary forces of speech acts are about the effects and consequences they produce. Matsuada (1993) alongside MacKinnon (1996), state that words can assault, injure and wound. Butler (1997) termed their formulation by saying that "linguistic injury acts like physical injury.

This paper sees hate speech as any form of biased expression that has the ability of promoting hatred towards an individual or a group of people on a particular basis including, status, ethno-religious identity, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, and disability.

Research on hate speech in Cameroon has been on the rise of recent, probably due to the present socio-political situation of the country. Besong (2020) has pointed out to the fact that hate speech existed in Cameroon even before the coming of the internet and several social media platforms. According to the author, it was formerly used mostly between politicians, administrators and civil servants as well as children and youths mostly residing in metropolitan towns, and that Cameroonians of all walks of life have used words advertently and inadvertently in the past which can be termed today as hate speech. The author opines that since it was formerly used offline, the impact of such was only felt by the targeted few but that the coming of the internet and social media increased the use and spread of hate speech in Cameroon, as information that before now remained between the perpetrator and the victims was able to spread and affect other individuals or groups, thus increasing its effect.

On the other hand, Barrach-Yousefi (2018), through an online survey was able to come up with a lexicon of hate speech commonly used on the social media in Cameroon. This lexicon comprises of words such as: Terrorist; Anglo-fou; Graffi, Cam no go; Ambazonia; Ambazozo; Two cubes of sugar in a basin

of water; Bamenda; Franco-frog; Rat; Dog, Biafra; Black leg; and Bamileke. This is similar to the work carried out by the Local Youth Corner Cameroon (2019) which found hate speech terms and phrases in Cameroon to include derogatory words like anglofools, franco-frog, cam no go/graffi, les Bamenda, Boko Haram, and terrorist. Barrach-Yousefi (2018) went on further to define each of these words as used in context of the Anglophone crisis. Nicola opined that hate speech in Cameroon is found mostly on *WhatsApp* groups, *Facebook* (pages, groups and profiles), and *Twitter*, and that it is used as a tool to achieve political and material ends (e.g., polarizing opinions, dehumanizing opponents, exacerbating feelings of frustration and hate, and calling for violent action).

The Local Youth Corner Cameroon (2019), examined the nexus between hate speech and violent conflict in Cameroon and found that hate speech, which appears in the forms of propaganda, fake news, and disinformation was destroying social cohesion in Cameroon and that it was becoming very prevalent among politicians, and civilians against government. The work suggested among many recommended solutions that public condemnations of hate speech by government and citizens were not enough. It called for a legislation to curtail and penalize users of hate speech.

Reacting to the abuse of freedom of speech in Cameroon, the Cameroon Minister of External Relations Le Jeune Mbella Mbella, in a public address "regretted that many citizens continue to misconstrue freedom of expression, to spread unconfirmed, biased, judgmental, nonexistence news, with the aim of causing instability" (Nsodzefe, 2019) . Similarly, in a press statement, the US Ambassador to Cameroon Peter Henry Berlerin, highlighted that; "freedom of speech should not give room to hate speech which most Cameroonians are advocating for..." (Musa, 2018).

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is hinged on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework proposed by Teun Van Dijk (1993) and Wodak and Meyer (2001). CDA is an emerging school of discourse with an emancipatory agenda, targeting the identification and the uncovering of discursive sources of hegemony, dominance and power in broader social, cultural and political contexts (Van Dijk, 1998). Critical Discourse Analysis is seen as a more critical and socio-political approach to language use.

The origin of discourse on power can be traced back to the end of the 1970s, where in team of researchers led by Roger Fowler, advocated for the study of "critical linguistics" (Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew, 1979). During the 1980s and 1990s this "critical" approach soon grew out to an international movement of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), under

the initial influence of European scholars (Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1993b, 2001; Wodak and Meyer, 2001). This movement was specifically interested in the discursive reproduction of social power. CDA refers to discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often obscure relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relationships and processes (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135).

It studies the role of discourse in society, and specifically aims at revealing the “relations between discourse, power, dominance and social inequality” (Van Dijk 1993b: 249). For this reason, it is accurate to define CDA as an applied linguistic discipline oriented towards solving social problems (Wodak, 2001). To Fairclough (1998), CDA interprets language as a form of social practice, and it appears transdisciplinary in nature as the approach aims at analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal unequal sources of dominance and hegemony with special reference to the political, and social contexts which contribute to the production and simultaneously in the distribution of social goods in society at micro and macro levels. Moreover, CDA clearly comes up with an explicit and implicit emancipatory objective which represents and rather (re)views language as a powerful tool for the persuasion of unrevealed intent.

For the Critical Discourse Analyst, language is not a simple phenomenon to interpret, rather it is very complex in nature as it is to some extent socially represented and ‘socially shaped’ with a keen emancipatory objective (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258; Wodak and Meyer, 2002). Wodak among a multitude of scholars began the study of language in relation to social structures and relations in society. The term CDA is often used at times interchangeably with Critical Linguistics (CL) but the latter is preferred these days for taking into consideration the context of language use as relevant. CL analyses three functions of text, that is ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions (Fowler, 1991). The first function deals with the experiences which a speaker or agent acquires from the world and the second function is related to building a bridge between the speaker and the listener with special reference to the personal attitudes and attributes of the speaker and the textual function appears exclusively instrumental for the first two functions (Fairclough, 1995, 1996).

Fairclough’s studies also discuss the constitutive nature of language in detail, which represents and reproduces social identities and forms the macro structural patterns of discourse. He further on elaborated that CDA tries to unpack the interactive nature of relationships between different people who are engaged in specific discourse patterns and also

bring to light the disguised objectives of texts semiotically.

Wodak appears with a rather different approach. Her explanation of CDA heavily relies upon the historical context in discourse. To her, discourse is proportionately linked to historical facts binding the discourse. By this, salient historical features should be taken note of when analysing a discourse. Wodak also focuses much on the investigative nature of discourse which directly aims at unequal resources of power and social goods in society as a whole and the consequences of this unequal distribution of goods to people, the nature of their social relations and its semiotic significance, and the instrumental role of text in reproduction of discourse practices.

Apart from these, another significant feature of CDA is interpretation of text to view the impact of this unequal distribution of social goods and linguistic resources on people and ultimately how to represent discourse, constitute and (re)construct social identities (Wodak, 2001; Fairclough, 1989, 1995a, 1995b, 2002).

7. METHODOLOGY

Data for this paper was collected from *Facebook* during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. *Facebook* was chosen as a site for the data for the reason that it is a heterogeneous setting with social actors from different socio-political backgrounds of Cameroon. It is also a setting which covers mixed speakers from the two Official Linguistic contexts of Cameroon. This paper also considered the different ethno-linguistic backgrounds these Cameroonians come from. It was also considered because it is open to people of all educational levels and walks of life.

The method of data collection included the selection of *Facebook* posts and comments linked to the topic under study. These posts and comments were downloaded or ‘screen shotted’, saved, and later presented on Microsoft Word for further analysis. Upon presentation, the data was filtered to avoid traces of personal identity. Some of the posts and comments were extracted from some popular *Facebook* ‘groups’, ‘pages’ and ‘personal Profiles’ we purposively visited while others were gotten through posts that appeared on our ‘*Facebook* feeds’ (mostly groups, pages and personal profiles we are ‘following’ on *Facebook*).

8. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

A total of 21 posts and comments were purposefully selected from the numerous posts and comments about the Anglophone crisis we found on *Facebook* within the year 2021 and 2022. They were later on reframed (where necessary) into ‘standard English’ for easier comprehension. Herring proposes that the researcher ought to operationalize key concepts in terms of discourse features (Herring, 2004, p. 13). To

this end, we ended up with the different features which emerged from the data itself and which assisted in the analysis. Following the categories we operationalized, we came up with the features we were looking for and which were aptly called features of discourse and hate speech. The terms features of discourse and hate speech in this paper is used to refer to specific features, not the sum of all the features found in the extracted posts and

comments. For the intent and purpose of the paper, the non-underlined and non-bolded forms or features do not warrant analysis. As a result of this, within these 21 posts and comments, several threads were identified and selected as features of discourse and hate speech. They were later on underlined, bolded and discussed using CDA.

Table 1: Italized features of discourse and hate speech extracted from some selected posts and comments on Facebook by Cameroonians during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon

User	Features of discourse and hate speech extracted from Facebook	Standard English form
01.	Strategy by <i>anglofools</i> . While others beating themselves on the head. kontri Sunday is history in areas listed below... These areas don't respect nonsense ghost town because <i>ambaterrorists</i> are not there. So <i>you</i> can see say na only fear di makes people shidon for house again <i>their</i> will. Not that <i>they</i> respect orders from <i>useless terrorists</i> with guns.	Strategy by Anglofools. While others are beating themselves on the head, Kontri Sunday (ghost town) is history in the areas listed below... These areas do not respect nonsense ghost towns because Amba Terrorists are not there. So you can see that those who stay at home do so due to fear and not deliberately, neither do they do so because they are respecting orders from useless terrorists with guns.
02.	<i>La Republicbig fool</i>	<i>La République</i> big fool.
03.	<i>CPDM Monster</i>	CPDM monster.
04.	<i>You are a slaveto them</i>	You are a slave to them.
05.	Ican't believe fools like <i>this</i> one exist I the 21 century but am even a <i>French person will always have a primitive mind set</i>	I cannot believe fools like this one exist in the 21 st Century. A Frenchman will always have a primitive mindset.
06.	<i>Any strange person should be mow down</i>	Any strange person should be mowed down.
07.	<i>Shut up shit hole LRC Kangaroos</i>	Shut up, shithole LRC (<i>La République</i>) Kangaroos.
08.	Get nothing from <i>this wicked government</i> that's why the Oroko sons who have taken up arms to defend their wealth will not take it lightly with some of <i>you</i> the <i>privilege slaves</i> who think that <i>they</i> are enjoying.	We get nothing from the wicked Government. That is why the Oroko sons who have taken up arms to defend their wealth will not take it lightly with some of you privileged slaves who think that they are enjoying.
09.	SUCURITY ALERT!!! MBIIM. <i>LR TERRORISTS</i> HAVE INVADED MBIM AS WE SPEAK. <i>THEY</i> ARE PRESENTLY AT JOURNEY END IN <i>THEIR</i> NUMBERS	SECURITY ALERT!!! Mbim. LR (<i>La République</i>) Terrorists have invaded Mbim as we speak. They are presently at Journey End (name of a place) in their numbers.
10.	Weare happy because all the ADF that <i>you</i> are claiming that Sako killed in Kumbo were <i>Terroristsoldiers</i> that <i>youvampire</i> are using to kill our ARFS SATAN negotiations is the only way out for <i>youOccultic, Numskullregime</i>	We are happy because all the ADFs (Ambazonian Defence Forces) you claim that Sako killed in Kumbo were Terrorist Soldiers that your vampires are using to kill our ARFs. Satan. Negotiation is the only way out for you occultic, numskull regime.
11.	When e bee say when Ekelebe kill amba, <i>wuna</i> di cry genocide but when sako kill 39 adf for kumbo, ayaba kill 12 for Guzan, <i>wuna</i> no cry genocide? Why <i>Ambafools</i> ?	You cry of genocide when a Government Soldier kills an Ambazonian fighter, but when Sako kills 39 ADFs in Kumbo, and Ayaba kills 12 in Guzan, you don't cry of Genocide. Why, Ambafools?
12.	<i>This dull delegates</i> they were 6 have <i>you</i> asked why one is dead? The Ndian Fighters are so violent because of what <i>they</i> have suffered, in <i>this</i> you one Cameroon the Ndian man have everything but get nothing from <i>this wicked government</i> that's why the Oroko...	These dull delegates. They were 6. Have you asked why one is dead? The Ndian fighters are so violent because of what they have suffered in this your "One Cameroon". The Ndian man has everything but gets nothing from the wicked government, that's why the Oroko...
13	And <i>your</i> own that IMF borrowed to <i>youimbeciles</i> like <i>Atangohave embezzled it</i>	That which IMF loaned to you, imbeciles like Atango have embezzled it.
14.	<i>U</i> re the one deceiving <i>ur</i> old self, did <i>Isay</i> there is no amba in Fako? Is just ahandful of <i>Banga Smokers</i> who reterrorising some remote villages.	You are the one deceiving your old self. Did I say there is no Ambazonian fighter in Fako? It is just a handful of Indian hemp smokers who are terrorising some remote

User	Features of discourse and hate speech extracted from Facebook	Standard English form
	We're living in peace 100% than <i>ur Ngraffi NW.Keep drinking ur poison & boiling ur stones, Efoulefou.</i>	villages. We're living 100%in peace than your Ngraffi (shortened form of Grass field). Keep drinking your poison and boiling your stones. Efoulefou (fool).
15.	By <i>your</i> comments, <i>we</i> 'll know <i>you</i> . <i>Cam no go</i>	By your comments, we know you. Came no go (someone who goes to a place and refuses to leave again).
16.	<i>Bafutman is a thief</i> and will not like this kidnapping to finish, <i>you terrorist</i>	A Bafutman is a thief and will not like these kidnappings to end. You terrorist.
17.	<i>What good comes from that your Bamenda?</i>	What good comes from Bamenda?
18.	Frustration at his highest peak. <i>Anglofou mentality</i>	Frustration at its highest peak. Anglofufu mentality.
19.	3 <i>terrorist Ambafrogs</i> send to hell with VIP ticket	Three terrorist Ambafrogs sent to hell with VIP tickets.
20.	<i>This is another Bameleke Marquisard NTUNGTU HYPOCRITES POLICE THAT WE SENT TO THE GATES OF HELL IN BALIKUMBAT YESTERDAY. They thought they had found a free feeding basket in Ambazonia</i>	This is another Bamileke marquissard hypocrite police that we sent to the gates of hell in Balikumbat yesterday. They thought they had found a free feeding basket in Ambazonia.
21.	Selfdefence dosent requires age. <i>francofools</i> get that in <i>your oily heads</i>	Self-defense doesn't require age. Francofools, get that in your oily heads.

9. RESULTS/DISCUSSION

According to the table above, posts and comments by Cameroonians on Facebook during the Anglophone crisis are characterized by the use of features of discourse such as inclusive and non-inclusive pronouns as well as the use of several words and expressions of hate speech. These words and expressions of hate speech are further intensified through the use of deictic expressions, several demeaning adjectives, metaphors and similes.

9.1. Inclusive and Non-Inclusive Pronouns

Inclusive pronouns such as *I* (as used by user number 05 and 14 in the table), *we* and *our*(as used by user number 10 in the table), presented in some of the excerpts in the table above have been used to create a feeling of belonging, while non-inclusive pronouns such as *you* and *your*(as used by user number 01, 04, 08, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 21 in the table), *they* and *them* (as used by user number 01, 04, 08 09, 12 and 20 in the table), have been used to create a feeling of not belonging. By this, the '*we*' and '*our*' of the in-group are considered as always right while the '*you*', '*your*', '*they*'and '*them*' of the out-group are considered to be always wrong irrespective of the situation. This is justified by the fact that positive words and expressions are used after the inclusive pronouns, while negative words and expressions are used after the non-inclusive pronouns. For example: "*We are happy because all the ADFs that you are claiming that Sako killed in Kumbo were Terrorist soldiers that your vampires are using to kill our ARFs*". In the context of the current paper, the reason for the usage of such pronouns is to show that a person either identifies or does not identify himself/herself with a particular group.

The use of the pronouns above implies that language use for the most part on Facebook during the

Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is based on ethno-political groupings. In such respect, when the out-group or the in-group feels threatened, they tend to use demeaning words and descriptions on each other so as to maintain their authority and power over the other. This goes in line with the fundamental notions of CDA as propounded by Van Dijk (1998), which reveals that people will tend to use the language of in-group and out-group in order to maintain their hegemony, dominance and power in broader social, cultural and political contexts.

9.2. Words and Expressions of Hate Speech

The table above also indicates that posts and comments on Facebook by Cameroonians during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon are characterized by words and expressions of hate speech. Some of them are familiar to English speakers, while some of them may look strange to non-Cameroonians because they are non-standard English words and expressions. They are considered by the current paper as words and expressions of hate speech based on the contexts in which they have been used.

9.2.1. Terrorist

The term terrorist is generally used to describe a person who uses unlawful violence and intimidation especially against civilians and governments in the pursuit of political aims (Tuesday and Clarke, n.d). In the context of the Anglophone crisis, we can say it is an inhumane way of describing both the Ambazonian fighters (see user number 01, 10, 14 and 19 in table), the Cameroonian military (see user number 09 in the table), and any individual or group that seems to support or sympathize with either the separatist fighters or the Cameroonian military (see user number 16 in the table). This is due to the cruel manner in which both state forces and the Ambazonian fighters are said to

behave on the field. Many innocent civilians have been killed as a result of their activities. As can be seen in the table above, this appellation is further intensified through the use of several demeaning adjectives and metaphors such as *useless* (see user number 01 in the table), *vampires* and *Satan* (user number 10 in the table), and *Banga Smokers* (as used by user number 14 in the table).

- **Alternative words and expressions that could be used:** Cameroonians, Cameroonians of English expression, Anglophones, Cameroonians of French expression, Francophones, pro-independence fighters, pro-government forces, secessionists.

9.2.2. Ambafools/Ambafrogs

The expressions Ambafools and Ambafrogs originated from the word Ambazonia. Ambazonia is the name of the self-proclaimed independent state of former Southern Cameroons. These terms were derived through back clipping to get 'Amba', and adding 'fools' and 'frogs' to it respectively. Those who use it on *Facebook*, do so in an attempt to liken the Ambazonian fighters, their supporters, and Anglophones in general to fools (stupidity) and frogs (ugliness). Some *Facebook* users think Anglophones supporting the activities of the Ambazonian fighters are stupid, because to them, the same Ambazonian fighters they are supporting are the ones inflicting pains on them (see user number 11 in the table). Some term them frogs (ugly), due to the way a majority of the Ambazonian fighters always look like, especially when they are killed or captured alive (see user number 19 in the table).

- **Alternative words and expressions that could be used:** Northwesterners, Southwesterners, Cameroonians of English expression, Anglophones, pro-independent fighters, separatists or Ambazonians (only when referring to those actively involved in the war).

9.2.3. Anglofou/Anglofools

Anglofou, commonly known as Anglofools, is derived from the word Anglophone through back clipping to get 'Anglo' and adding fuo to it. The word 'fuo' is derived from the French word 'fou', which literally means a fool, a stupid or mad person. It is a common word used by Francophones both online and offline to describe Anglophones in Cameroon. This is because the English culture is different from the French culture in several ways. By this, some Francophones tend to use this appellation in order to cause the Anglophones and the English culture as a whole to look inferior, in order to easily suppress them. This finding is similar to that of Barrach-Yousefi (2018) who says that this expression is used by some Francophones in Cameroon to refer to Anglophones as fools or mad people. The current study is of the opinion that some Anglophones also use it especially on *Facebook* to refer to other fellow Anglophones they consider to be stupid

in their approach to the crisis. This can be seen in the following excerpt by user number 01: "*Strategy by Anglofools. While others are beating themselves on the head, kontri Sunday is history in areas listed below...*" By speaking this way, they believe they can win them over.

- **Alternative words and expressions that could be used:** Anglophones, Cameroonians of English expression, Northwesterners and Southwesterners.

9.2.4. Graffi

Graffi is a Cameroonian Pidgin word derived from the phonetic pronunciation of the words 'grass field'. It is a term that is generally used to describe those who hail from the Western Grasslandslike North Westerners and Westerners of Cameroon, where there are grass fields (Barrach-Yousefi, 2018). The term can be said to pose no problem when used in a neutral way (especially before the Anglophone crisis became a violent one). Nonetheless, in the context of the ongoing Anglophone crisis, it carries a negative connotation and has a negative effect when used by both Anglophones and Francophones to describe Anglophones in general. It also becomes negative when both Anglophones of the South West Region and Francophones use it to refer to North Westerners on basis of their ethnic origin and opinions about the crisis. An example as drawn from one of the posts presented in the table above is: "*You are the one deceiving your old self. Did I say there is no Amba in Fako? It is just a handful of Banga Smokers who are terrorizing some remote villages... We are living in peace 100% than those in your Ggraffi North West. Keep drinking your poison & boiling your stones, Efolefou*". By this, the North West Region is considered by many, especially Southwesterners, as a land that has nothing good to offer to those who hail from it. This can be seen in the post by user number 17: "*What good comes from that your Bamenda?*"

- **Alternative words or expressions that could be used:** Northwesterners, Westerners.

9.2.5. Cam no go

Cam no go is a Cameroonian Pidgin English expression used to describe something that goes to a particular place and refuses to leave. Nicola (2018) says that it was originally used to refer to a common skin disease that is particularly persistent and difficult to treat. In line with the Anglophone Crisis, it generally has a negative connotation. It is used to insult anyone from the North West Region who has settled in the South West Region of Cameroon either as an IDP (internally displaced person), a plantation worker, a businessman or a civil servant/worker. The following excerpt: "*By your comments, we'll know you. Cam no go*" (see user number 15 in the table), shows that the author of the post is obviously a Southwesterner while the person whom he/she is referring to is surely from the North West, since many laborers, especially farmers from the North West Region are believed to be fleeing

from the North West to the South West to work in plantations because the North West, to them, is not as fertile as the South West. This argument is supported by the excerpt below in which the author (user number 14), describes the North West Region as a barren land—a land of fruitless rocks and mountains: “*Keep drinking your poison & boiling your stones*”.

- **Alternative words or expressions that could be used:** Northwesterner, Cameroonians of the North West.

9.2.6. La Republic/LRC

The expression *La Republic or LRC* (correctly written in French as *La République*), means “the Republic”; that is, the Republic of Cameroon. History holds that Cameroon was once a two state federation (English and French) with an autonomous legislature. The latter was changed into a one state republic with a central government believed by many to be dominated by French speaking Cameroonians. Many, especially Anglophones even before the Anglophone crisis became a violent one believe that this change to a one state republic had a manipulative agenda, due to some discriminatory practices which they think has led to hardship and suffering on the most part of Anglophones who also think they own the greater percentage of the country’s natural resources (wealth). Many Anglophone Cameroonians on *Facebook* during the Anglophone crisis therefore use the word *La Republic* negatively to refer to the current regime especially its military and government officials. Anything associated to the government of Cameroon and French is seen by most Anglophones advocating for total separation/independence as bad and illegal. This can be seen through the use of expressions such by different user number 02, 03, 05, 07, 10, and 12 respectively in the table: “*La Republic big fool*”; *CPDM Monsters*, “*a French person will always have a primitive mindset*”; “*...shithole LRC Kangaroos*”; *Occultic numskull regime*; *this dull delegate*, and *this wicked government*”.

- **Alternative words or expressions that could be used:** Cameroon, the government of Cameroon.

9.2.7. Francofools

Just like with the case of the Anglophones, Francophones are termed by Anglophones on *Facebook* as *Francofools* (see user number 21 in the table). This expression long existed even before the outbreak of the ongoing crisis in 2016. By this, it is believed that Anglophones use it in an attempt to counter Francophones for calling them *Anglofools*. By this, they tend to call Francophones ‘*Francofools*’ believing that by doing so, the Francophones will stop calling them ‘*Anglofools*’. They describe Francophones as fools; or a people who act in abnormal ways. Since Francophones and Anglophones have different cultural origins, there is always that tendency for Anglophones to think that

their culture is superior to that of the Francophones, whom to them are dirty, corrupt, and badly brought up.

9.2.8. Bamileke Marquissards.

In addition, data in the table above shows that some *Facebook* users during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon use the expression *Bamileke Marquissards* to refer to Cameroonians from the West Regions of Cameroon. The term Bamileke in itself has no negative connotation attached to it as it is the name of all those who hail from the West Region of Cameroon. Over the years, many have tended to use the term Bamileke to refer to someone who is stingy or dirty. In the context of the Anglophone crisis, the appellation *Bamileke Marquissards* simply brings to the forefront the history of the *Marquis*, wherein thousands of Bamilekes as recounted by someone killed by the regime at that time for political reasons. The *Marquissards* also known as *les Marquis* were Bamilekes who resisted French rule through guerrilla warfare tactics. The expression is therefore used to mock the Bamileke people and to remind them of this hurtful past (see the post by user number 20 in the table). Another ethnic group which is a target of hate speech on *Facebook* in Cameroon, even though not very common, is the Bafut tribe. The people of Bafut are tagged as ‘*thieves*’. This takes us back to an old tale about “seven kata”, which holds that a certain man from Bafut once stole a cow and carried on his head using several folded dresses to prevent his head from hurting. In the context of the Anglophone crisis, separatist fighters from Bafut are believed by some to be involved in kidnapping for ransom as seen in the excerpt: “*Bafutman is a thief and will not like this kidnapping to finish, you terrorist*” (user number 15 in the table). The expression is considered as hate speech because it is pejorative in nature and will naturally make anyone who hails from this tribe to feel bad.

- **Alternative words and expressions for Bamileke Marquissard:** Westerners, Cameroonians of the West Region.

9.2.9. CPDM Monsters

The term *CPDM Monsters* is directed towards members of government and at times mere civil servants. CPDM (Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement) is the ruling party in Cameroon. Anyone associated to it in any way is considered by many Cameroonians as a corrupt or bad person. This is due to the high level of corruption in the country, which is believed to have contributed to hardship on the side of a majority of Cameroonians. Top government officials are well known for embezzlement of public funds. In the context of the Anglophone crisis, any Anglophone top government official is considered a CPDM, and thus seen as a sellout. A sellout in this context is someone who betrays or hands over his people to another because of money, power and fame. Many believe that the Anglophone crisis exists today because

of the inability of the ruling party through its government to rule the people correctly. The government as well as top government officials of the current regime are termed by many on *Facebook* as *occultists*, *numskulls*, and *wicked*. The aspect of occultism is drawn from the strongly believed myth about politics/power and occultism. On the other hand, the appellation 'numskulls' is used to describe the regime in power as foolish, as to say that a majority of those in authority are incompetent. An example is the Minister of Territorial Administration, who is termed an imbecile by user number 13. The term 'wicked' stems from the popular saying that the Cameroonian government does not want the crisis to end, reason why it has refused to call for an inclusive dialogue with the separatists.

- **Alternative words and expressions that could be used:** members of government, CPDM militants, members of the ruling party, civil servants.

10. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper has examined how hate speech is represented on *Facebook* by Cameroonians through their posts and comments during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. It found that language use for the most part on *Facebook* during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is based on social groupings. By this, when one group feels threatened by the other, they turn to use demeaning words and expressions on the other group in order to maintain their authority and power over the other. This is done through the use of inclusive pronouns (e.g. *I*, *we*, and *our*) and non-inclusive pronouns (e.g. *you*, *your* and *their*), as well as words and expressions that excite hatred such as: *terrorists*; *Ambafools/Ambafrogs*; *Anglofou/Anglofools*; *Graffi*; *Cam no go*; *Bamileke Marquissard*; *La Republic/LRC*; *Francofools*; and *CPDM monsters*. These words and expressions of hate speech are further intensified through the use of deictic expressions like *this*, *that*, *your*, *those* and several demeaning adjectives like *wicked*, *dull* and *big fool*, metaphors like *fool*, *vampire* and *Satan*, and similes such as *imbeciles like Atango*. As a matter of fact, the study discovered that some Francophones likewise some Anglophones all employ the use of hate speech on targeted individuals and groups. Hate speech on social media in Cameroon has far reaching consequences on those who employ it and on the targeted individuals and groups. Through hate speech like "*Any strange person should be mow down*" (by user number 06 for example), several innocent Cameroonians have been tortured, kidnapped, imprisoned and killed, while others have gone on exile or are seeking asylum abroad or in other regions of Cameroon due to fear.

Since hate speech is not just a speech in itself but also an act, this paper suggests that social media platforms, especially *Facebook* be censored to prevent the spread of hate speech in Cameroon during and after

the Anglophone crisis. By this, a counter hate speech lexicon peculiar to the ethno-political situation of Cameroon should be built/updated and used in the fight against hate speech both online and offline. Words that are considered as less offensive or demeaning should be used to replace words that instigate hatred. The paper has proposed some of such words and they include: Amabazonian fighters, secessionists, and government military instead of terrorists; Former British Southern Cameroons, Ambazonians, Anglophone Cameroonians, and Northwesterners and Southwesterners instead of Ambafools/Ambafrogs; Anglophones, Cameroonians of English expression, Northwesterners or Southwesterners instead of Anglofou/Anglofools; Northwesterner or Westerner instead of Graffi; Northwesterner instead of Cam no go; Westerner, Cameroonians of the West Region instead of Bamileke Marquissards; the Republic of Cameroon, Cameroon, government, or the government of Cameroon instead of La Republic/LRC; Francophones, Cameroonians of French expression instead of Francofools; and members of the ruling party, CPDM militants, members of government, or civil servants instead of "CPDM monsters".

NGOs should intensify the fight against the use of hate speech by schooling Anglophones likewise Francophones irrespective of their statuses on the negative impact of hate speech; that is how it is contributing to the worsening situation of the Anglophone crisis and national unity. This paper firmly believes that if work is done for the social and cultural transformation of all people in Cameroon, then the usage hate speech in Cameroon will decline.

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