Beyond Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model:
A Look into Some Bassa-French Code-Switched Discourse Samples

Mbeng Sampson Tambe

Ecole Doctorale De Maroua, University of Maroua, Maroua, Cameroon

ABSTRACT

This article sets out to parse code-switched discourse samples involving Bassa and French, using the Matrix Language Frame Model proposed by Scotton. The model is based on the assumption that in code-switching, there must be a dominant language referred to as the Matrix Language (ML) and a gap filler language referred to as the Embedded Language (EL). It is further claimed in this model that the ML is always the first language of the speaker, who code-switches, and also the dominant language in the linguistic environment where code-switching occurs. The model was applied to two codes: Swahili-English, and French-Arabic. In the present article, the endeavor is to find out how Scotton's model unravels code-switching in a multilingual context where three or four codes may be involved in modules considered to be two codes at surface level. The endeavor is also to find out how the model sorts out the dominant language, i.e. the Matrix Language in Code-switched discourse samples with a 50/50 morpheme split. It has equally been argued in the present contribution that discourse dominance or the morpheme frequency criterion is not the only variable to be used to predict, and carve out the ML in switched or mixed discourse. There are, indeed, switched data where focus prevails over morpheme dominance.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article a pour but d'analyser des exemples de mélange de codes impliquant le Bassa et le français en se servant du modèle proposé par Scotton, lequel porte sur l'ossature de productions orales entremêlées. Selon ce modèle, dans chaque mélange de codes, il y a nécesssairement une langue dominante appelée la Matrice, et une langue secondaire, celle des éléments enchasés. Le modèle soutient ,en outre, que la matrice est toujours la première langue de l'individu qui procède au mélange de codes, et aussi la langue la plus en vue dans la communauté linguistique où le mélange de codes s'effectue. Ce modèle a été testé sur deux codes: le Swahili et l'anglais, et l'arabe et le français. Dans le présent article, notre souci est de voir comment le modèle proposé par Scotton traite la question du mélange de codes dans un context multilingue où trois voire quatre codes peuvent être impliqués dans des modules considérés comme deux codes du point de vue de la surface. Notre souci est aussi de voir comment le modèle de Scotton parvient à dégager la langue dominante, c'est-à-dire la matrice dans les productions orales entremêlées où le même nombre de morphèmes est enregistré dans les deux langues ou codes mélangés . La présente contribution se propose aussi d'émettre l'idée selon laquelle la matrice d'une production orale mêlée ne se diétecte pas seulement sur la base de la dominance morphologique, mais aussi et parfois sur le focus de la production.

KEYWORDS: *Scotton's Matrix, Language Frame Model, Bassa-French Code-Switched Discourse Samples*

INTRODUCTION

The multilingual situation witnessed in Cameroon from the colonial period to date remains, so far, exceptional in Africa as a result of the existence on the Cameroonian territory of at least four language types: indigenous languages, official languages, lingua francas, and hybrid codes. In arithmetic terms, indigenous or home languages could be 300 or more, which are genetically spread among the Afro-Asiatic, the Nilo-Saharian and the Congo-Kordofanian phyla (Greenberg, 1966 Guthrie, 1967; ALCAM, 1983). By the same token, official languages are two: French and English as inscribed in the State constitution, while some major lingua francas so far identified include Pidgin English, which is used by at least 89% of the entire Cameroonian population (Mbangwana, 1989), Fulfuldé also used in a great part of the Eastern region and all of Adamawa, North and Far North regions of Cameroon. Mongo Ewondo (pronounced mɔ́ŋgɔ́ èwôndô) covers the Centre and South regions. Other languages of wider use, which can also be classified as lingua francas in Cameroon, are Bassa in the Littoral, the Centre and part of the South West regions. Kanuri and Shuwa Arabic are used in

the Far North region and South Tchad (Kouega and Baimada, 2011). Ejagham too is of wider use as it spreads from all of Eyumojock Sub-Division in Cameroon to Calabar in Nigeria (ALCAM, 1983).

Hybrid codes are not specific to geographic entities in Cameron, but are casual speech mannerisms erected into codes, and identified with younger generations, with regard notably to code-switching or code-mixing. Those so far identified and discussed more or less methodologically include Franglais (Ze Amuela, 1982), Camspeak (Tiayon, 1985), Camfranglais (Chia, 1992) and the famous Cameroon Pidgin English (Mbangwana, 1989). What then about these other 3rd languages, which are included in secondary and high school curricula, then taught and learned mostly in the Francophone sub-system of education, such as Spanish, German, Arabic, Chinese, Italian, etc? Their presence and impact on the multilingual situation in Cameroon cannot be overlooked.

Within the multiplicity above evoked, code-switching and code-mixing are pre-eminent with cases involving the use of three or four linguistic systems in a single sample discourse. This, as aforementioned, is very commonplace with younger generations of speakers, whose pleasure is to mix codes in a bid to either amuse potential listeners or to remain distinct from other users of the same language or groups of languages (Chia, 1992). The present write-up examines code-switching between Bassa and French from the perspective of Scotton's 1993 Matrix Language Frame Model (MLFM). The languages of study are, thus, Bassa and French.

Bassa is a Bantu noun class language which falls under the Congo-Kordofanian phylum. It is spoken in the Littoral, the Centre and part of the South-West Regions of Cameroon. Dominant areas where this language is spoken within the Cameroonian territory include all of the Sanaga Maritime Division and some quarters of Douala in the Littoral region, Nyong et Kélé in the Centre Region, and Limbe (Isokolo and Garden Quarters) in the South West Region. This language enjoys the status of a standardized language in Cameroon. It is a tone language with very complex morpho-syntactic peculiarities. The user population can be estimated at about 3.500.000 speakers interspersed all-round Cameroon (ALCAM, 1993). Dialectal varieties do exist as one moves from one area or linguistic community to another, but mutual intelligibility is not in the least tampered with (Bitja'a, 1992).

French is an exogenous or exoglossic language in Cameroon. Imported to Cameroon by colonial masters, it remained a dominant language in administrative affairs even after colonialism and became one of the official languages alongside English. Till now, it is one of the languages of instruction in the educational system in Cameroon from nursery to university. Bassa and French are languages with distinct morpho-syntactic peculiarities that are assumed to be affected when code-switching occurs. Part of the expectations of this study is thus to capture some of these alternations of the syntax and morphology of languages involved in code-switching.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Code-switching has become a topic of growing interest among sociolinguists all around the world today. It is known

to set in with the co-existence of two or more languages, which are effectively used within a linguistic community. The peculiarity with the situation in Cameroon is that users of indigenous languages generally switch to English and/or French only when they initiate discourse in the home language, but hardly or never so when the discourse is initiated the other way round. There are, thus, myriads of scholarly contributions on code-switching, some of which are cited in this write-up to illustrate language use in a bilingual or multilingual context.

Forson (1979) analyzed Akan-English switched varieties, using the sentence as the basic unit of code-switching. Akan is a major Ghanaian language which has three dialectal varieties, namely Asante Twi, Akuapim Twi, and Fante. However, the context in which sentences were used was not specified.

In a similar study, Anyidoho and Dakubu (2008) surveyed the use of English and indigenous languages among students of the University of Ghana. It was shown that respondents preferred English during formal situations but were uncertain as to which language (English or the indigenous language) during informal settings. The major drawback was that the researchers did not focus on the rationale behind the choice of language in specific settings.

Mohammeda and Ofori (2011) carried out a socio-linguistic study on "Ghanaian English and Code-Switching in Catholic Churches". Using Twi (a dominant indigenous language in Accra) and English, they demonstrated how homilies are often delivered partly in Twi and partly in English, or both languages. Excerpts of the homily were examined through the prism of Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model. Their study was, however, pretty limited in terms alternations resulting from code-switching.

In Cameroon specifically, outstanding studies focusing on code-switched phenomena include those of Ze Amvela (1982) where the franglais syndrome was rigorously discussed. Using French and English in code-switched or code-mixed data recorded from Yaounde University students, the above author showed with concrete examples of how the structure and contents of both languages are affected each time the phenomenon occurs. Subjects involved in the research project were, however, not clearly defined.

Also of interest in this review is Chia's (1992) Camfranglais, a mixture of French, English and indigenous language structures in single discourse samples. The focal point of Chia's analysis was how lexical items in English and /or French are stripped to the barest minimum, then fitted in code-switched utterances alongside mutilated indigenous language forms. Analyzes carried out by the above author were, however, not based on any well-known frame.

The third pattern of analysis of language phenomena in the Cameroon multilingual situation is that of Tiayon (1985) in his work entitled "Camspeak: a new pattern of speech in Cameroon". Using concrete examples that defy imagination, Tiayon demonstrated that once university students from the diverse origin and cultural background are grouped for a common purpose like university studies, they are able to create an argot of theirs, use it and understand one another

without seeking interpretation from who-so-ever. However, like the other two experiences narrated from the Cameroon multilingual situation, Tiayon's Camspeak was limited to a presentation of mixed utterances without any in-depth analysis of alternations affecting the structure and contents of the codes involved.

Contrary to contributions from Ze Amvela, Chia and Tiayon above presented, this write-up examines Bassa-French switched discourse samples with the conviction in mind that Scotton's morpheme dominance or quantitative criterion is not the only parameter for sorting out the matrix language when sentence constituents are mixed. Indeed, there are extremely complex discourse samples whose ML may not forcibly be obtained on grounds of morpheme dominance, but rather from the focus or focal point of the utterance. This write-up also intends to shed light on the syntactic, morphological and phonological alternations that affect the recipient language each time code-switching occurs.

METHODOLOGY
The 20 code-switched discourse samples of this write-up were videotaped and audio-taped from 10 Bassa native speakers in an ordinary conversational situation, using the participant observation procedure. That was in Puma, a locality situated mid-way the Douala-Yaounde axis in Francophone Cameroon. Theoretically seen, the endeavor was to gather strings of Bassa-French switched utterances in language use from the interactionist perspective, that is "One in which interlocutors, depending on the context and their intentions, employ language in different ways for different purposes" (Mohammeda and Ofori, 2011). Gumperz (1982) in his "contextualization cue" holds that code-switching and code-mixing signal a change in topic, attitude, or interest since each one of the various languages within multilingual societies has its specific identity and function.

In the data collection process, participants were young Bassa indigenes aged 20 to 30 years. These emerging adults share similar character traits, one of which is boisterousness manifested right in their oral language. Their knowledge of both Bassa and French is sound to a very significant extent, so, if they mean it, they can use each language (distinctly) without any recourse to code-switching. However, since language mixing has become a current widespread mannerism these days, they are bound to switch from Bassa to French, and vice-versa. They do sincerely exaggerate by bringing into one and the same discourse sample, three, at times four different codes.

Of the 20 Bassa-French (switched or mixed) utterances, 13 were picked out of the raw data, and analyzed, using Scotton's Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model. The MLF model is presented as a theory of analysis of code-switched-data sets conceived by Carol, Myers-Scotton in 1993, in her work "*Duelling Languages: Grammatical Structure in Code-Switching*". The model underscores the point that in any code-switched discourse sample, there must be a matrix language (ML) and an Embedded Language (EL). The ML is the language which on the basis of the Morpheme Frequency Criterion (Scotton, 1993), frames the syntactic structure of code-switched discourse. The EL only plays the role of a gap filler language. The ML is assumed to be almost always the speaker's first language or the speaker's better-known language. It is equally assumed to be the most dominant

language across the community in terms of the types of interactions in which it is the more socially unmarked.

In terms of analysis proper, the MLF Model stresses the necessity to parse code-switched discourse samples from the standpoint of the contrasting roles fulfilled by the languages involved. These roles are precisely those of ML and EL. According to Scotton, three types of components are brought into relief in any code-switched discourse sample, and these must form the basis of analysis.
➢ ML islands, which are made up of ML material and conforming to ML grammar;
➢ EL islands, which are composed of EL material in accordance with EL grammar, and
➢ Mixed ML + EL constituents.

In the light of the above specification, the ML sets the frame of any code-switched discourse, and this involves specifically the required order of morphemes. As such, the EL's own task is only to contribute content morphemes, which are set into ML structure. The ML model distinguishes between system morphemes and content morphemes in code-switching. System morphemes include verbal inflections, complementizers, determiners, quantifiers, possessives, the copula and some prepositions. Content morphemes include prepositions, conjunctions and some pronouns. For the purpose of illustration, system morphemes are displayed in 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d) adapted from Scotton's French Arabic code-switched discourse samples.

1. System Morphemes in Code-Switching
A. Je sens [bi'anna] Je suis Vieux pour encore Faire d'études.
(I feel that I am old to do more studies)
B. Je me reveille le matin: la première des choses à faire, comme un Militaire, le lit [djali].
(I wake up in the morning: the first thing to do, like a soldier, my bed)
C. [Had] le projet, Vous le faites dans quel cadre?
(This the project, you are doing it in what context?).
D. Mon idée, c'est que lorsqu'on append [f] le lycée, on est dominé par le Professeur.
(My view, it is that, when one studies in the school, one is dominated by the teacher)

In 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d), the incorporated Arabic morphemes are in brackets, and their gloss(es) in English are underlined. In terms of analysis, the following are on display.
A. ML = French (10 morphemes)
    EL = Arabic (1 morpheme)
B. ML = French (16 morphemes)
    EL = Arabic (1 morpheme)
C. ML = French (8 morphemes)
    EL = Arabic (1 morpheme)
D. ML = French (15 morphemes)
    EL = Arabic (1 morpheme)

On the basis of discourse dominance, the data displayed in 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d) exhibit French as the ML in view of the fact that French sets the frame, which involves specifically the required order of morphemes, and which provides all syntactically relevant system morphemes. The Morpheme Order Principle and the Quantitative Criterion thus cause French to emerge as the frame language, and Arabic the gap filler language. The argument is whether French is the "first"

or the "better" known language for the bilinguals whose oral productions have been recorded. Here, thus, is Scotton's model for analyzing code-switched discourse samples. In the remaining section of this study, code-switched discourse samples in Bassa-French pattern are displayed and analyzed.

THE CORPUS OF SWITCHED UTTERANCES

1. Mângɛ́ núnú à yê yɔ̂ŋ Zoids lɛ́
   a child this SM is taking weight much
   (This child is putting on much weight)
2. Il faudrait lɛ́-lui-même à bɔ̂ŋ se débrouiller ǹdêk
   It needs that himself SM does try a bit
   (It is important/necessary for himself to fight a bit hard)
3. Bɔ̂ŋɛ́ bà yé bɔ̂ŋ jeu de sable
   Children SM are do play on the sand
   (Children are playing on sand)
4. Petit fils yɛ̂m núnú
   Small son mine this this
   (This is my grandson)
5. Ecriture yɛ̂m ì yê très fine
   Write mine SM is very clair
   (My handwriting is very clair)
6. Tout home est convaincu que le ḿbôngó tʃɔβì lôg nì mbôŋ est un mets exquis
   All man is convinced that mbongo tsɔbi and cassava is a delicious meal
   (Every person is convinced that mbôŋgó tʃɔßi and cassava is a delicious meal)
7. ăzâmb'wêm! à óm coup de pied number one sur les gwêp de de la ngɔ̂ndâ
   To God my! SM land kick of foot number on the buttocks of the girls!
   (Oh my God! He has landed a hard kick on the girl's buttocks).
8. à-làmà rendre me compte jour pour jour
   SM ought to pay me to account day for day
   (He/she ought to render account to me every day)
9. Rentrée scolaire ì yê aujourd'hui
   Come back school is SM is today
   (School-re-opening is today)
10. Lá kîî mɛ̂ gwɛ̂ raison wɛ̂ nú ú sá'á mɛ̂
    There that I have a reason you it compensates me
    (As I am right, it is up to you to compensate)
11. Ûsômbó lɛ́ mɛ́ expliquer wɛ́ yɔm î?
    SM wants that I explain you thing that
    (Do you want me to explain that thing to you?)
12. Báná bôt bá yê escrocs à vue d'oeil.
    These people SM are crooks to seeing of eye.
    (These people are crooks to the seeing of eye)
13. Mɛ́ m-bâr bô lɛ́ liste de presence effective à yê hɛ́
    Me SM ask that list of presence effective SM is where.
    (I enquired from them where the effective presence list was)
14. Ûyê sans ignorer lɛ́ push yɛ̂m à yê très strict.
    SM be without ignoring that father mine SM be very strict
    (You do not ignore the fact that my father is very strict).
15. Mût núnú à cravater mɛ́ yâg mɛ́m-gravatar ńyɛ́
    A person this SM button me too SM button him
    (This person buttoned me (and) I also buttoned him).
16. Lâ kii ù télɛ́p hàlâ mɛ̂ ń-lâ bɛ́p wɛ̂ aller et Retour
    There as you stand like that me fit beat you to and from
    (There as you are standing, I can beat you to and fro).
17. Mɛ̂ lama kɛ̂. Cependant, nɔb à bɔb à bɔŋ lɛ́ me prendre d'autres dispositions nânɔ

I fit go however rain SM do that I /m take other measures now.
(I was to go but the rain caused me to take other measures now).
18. Désordre ì bê mû ǹgândâg, alors mɛ́ rétirer mɛ́ mɛ́rɛ́
    Disorder SM be there much then I/me withdraw me myself.
    (There was disorder there, so I decided myself to withdraw).
19. Bâ conclude en attendant le verdict final lɛ́ à rembourser môni wâp
    SM conclude while waiting for the final verdict that SM reimburse his/her money
    (They concluded while waiting for the final verdict that the reimburse his money).
20. Dóctâ múnú à yê très ponctuel lɛ́
    Doctor this SM be very punctual much.
    (This doctor is very punctual)

Analysis of Selected Bassa-French Code-Switched Discourse Samples

Utterance 1: (a)   *Petit fils yɛ̂m núnú*
                          Small son mine this this
                          (This is my grandson)

ML = Bassa (2 morphemes)
EL = French (2 morphemes)

In utterance 1(a), there is evidence of a 50/50 morpheme split that brings up the problem of singling out the ML and EL. However, if the morpheme order principle is taken into account, then the ML is Bassa, and EL, French. Bassa is considered ML in view of the fact that the attention directing deictic "núnú" (This) is in Bassa in actual fact, not in French, even if the focal point of the utterance is "petit-fils". Also, the producer of the entire utterance's first language is Bassa, The question of predictability of dominant language in an utterance with equal morpheme split may find a beginning of answer when the probability for a pure French indigene to turn round, and code-switch between Bassa as an L2 and French as an L1, is taken into consideration. The authentic pattern of Utterance 1 is displayed in 1(b).

1(b): *ǹlâl wɛ̂m núnú*
          (This is my grandson).

The above utterance involves three morphemes in contrast to its code-switched counterpart in 1(a). The key peculiarity with this utterance is that the possessive adjective "wɛ̂m" becomes "yɛ̂m" when the utterance is code-switched with French language forms. A point to retain this is that "wɛ̂m" becomes "yɛ̂m" in an environment where forms of the exoglossic language are included in the utterance. This change from "wɛ̂m" to "yɛ̂m" indicates a morphological alternation resulting from code-switching or mixing.

Utterance 2(a): *Ecriture yɛ̂m ì yê très fine.*
                     Writing mine SM be very clear
                     (My writing if very clear)

Utterance 2 also displays a 50/50 morpheme split wherein Bassa and French count every three morphemes on the same scale. Here too, the syntactic frame of the utterance is apparently shaped by the Bassa morpheme order principle, since the verb pattern through which the utterance claims meaning, is in Bassa. Bassa is thus the ML and French, the EL.

When Utterance 2 is looked at from its authentic form displayed in 2(b), there are changes in word morphology and others.

2(b): *mâtìlâ mêm má yê mâtídígí*
Writing mine SM be clear
(My writing is clear)

In 2(b), the authentic word for "writing" is "mâtìlâ". This authentic word alone calls into play the inherent morphological shapes concealed by the Bassa code, hence the modifications seen in the possessive "mêm", the SM "mà" and the copula "yê". The alternation thus observed in the utterance is again morphological.

Utterance 3: *Rentrée scolaire ì yè aujourd'hui*
Back school SM be today.
(School re-opening is today).
ML =Bassa (2 morphemes)
El =French (3morphemes)

Utterance 3 presents a case where the ML is fewer in morphemes than the EL. Here, the focus of the utterance may well be "rentrée scolaire" and "aujourd'hui", but the frame of the utterance is " ì yê", so that even with discourse dominance, i.e. the morpheme frequency criterion, French words are merely fitted into a Bassa-conceived utterance, given that it is "ì yê" that actualizes the utterance. The uncode-switched pattern of Utterance 3 is displayed in 3(b).

3(b): *bìtimbî bi sûkúlû bi yé lên*
Beginning SM school SM be today
(The start of the (new) school year is today)

In 3 (b), the number of morphemes is 3 as opposed to the 5 obtained in 3(a). The peculiarity observed with 3(b) is alternations in possessive markers, subject markers and tone shapes where bî→ì; and [:] →[']

In sum, what sounds morpho-syntactically peculiar with utterances 1(a), 2(a) and 3(a) is the alternations that occur on the SM, the PM and the tone shapes each time code-switching occurs as seen in their uncode-switched patterns displayed in 1(b), 2(b) and 3(b) respectively. Although this appears to be a widespread phenomenon with natural languages, particularly the indigenous languages in Cameroon, it makes a point to mention that it partakes of morpho-syntactic perturbations which are only perceptible in the indigenous languages, but sparingly in the exoglossic languages. The insertion of lexical elements of indigenous languages into exoglossic language structure does not, so to say, affect the morphology and syntax system of these languages in much the same way as the insertion of exoglossic lexical elements into the indigenous language structure does.

Utterance 4(a): *Tout Homme est convaincu que ḿbôngó tʃɔβì lôg nì mbôŋ est un mets exquis*
(Every person is convinced that mbongo tsɔbi and cassava is a delicious meal)

Utterance 4(a) contains 15 morphemes, 10 of which are French and 5, Bassa. As such the ML is French and the EL, Bassa. French dominates in Utterance 4(a) not only in

morpheme frequency but also in the syntactic frame. Bassa is thus seen, in this utterance, as a gap-filler language. The uncode-switched pattern of Utterance 4(a) is presented in 4(b).

**4(b)*:* *í kî môt ă ńyì lé ḿbôngó tʃɔβì lôg nì mbôŋ*
Em any person SM know that mbongo fish with cassava *ì yê ɔngɛ̂ bidzɛ̂k*
SM be good food.
(Every person knows that mbongot tʃɔβì and cassava is a delicious meal)

4(b), like its code-switched version in Utterance 4(a), is made up of 15 morphemes also. In these two utterances, there are no major changes in terms of alternation in the noun, verb or adjective systems of the languages in contact.

Utterance 5: *ă-zâmb'wêm! à òm coup de pied number one sur les gwêm de la ǹ- gɔ̂ndâ*
(My God! He unleashed a very hard kick on the girl's buttocks)

Utterance 5 counts all together 16morphemes. It portrays a code-switched case involving the display of four linguistic systems, notably Ewondo, Bassa, French and English or Pidgin English (PE). The question is that of knowing which of these four systems is to be considered as the ML that sets the syntactic frame of Utterance 5 so that the others are just ELs. From the standpoint of discourse dominance, French is outstanding with 7 morphemes followed by Bassa with 4, Ewondo with 3, and PE with 2. To admit on grounds of morpheme frequency that French is the first or the best-known language to the producer of the above utterance as Scotton's model does claim is questionable. It is apparently difficult to point out the ML in Utterance 5, but it can equally be argued that Bassa constitutes the ML, although the pace of the utterance is set in Ewondo, with three morphemes. Bassa is held to be the ML in view of the fact that the content morphemes are the action verb "ÓM" and the nouns "gwɛ̂p" and "ngɔ̂ndâ". These morphemes are central to the understanding of Utterance5, such that if they are omitted, the meaning of the utterance is immediately obscured. Also, if a display of a habitual structure of Utterance 5 were attempted, that is one which is stripped of foreign elements, it would be seen that the content morphemes singled out are still present and are semantically potent. The habitual structure of 5 is elicited in 5(b).

5(b): *à-lóβầ! à óm bâŋgá kûr í gwɛ̂p bí gɔ̂ndâ ngòndâí í*
To God SM fling big blow on buttock SM girl.
(God! He has given a hard kick on that girl's buttocks)

As seen above, content morphemes which are semantically potent, and which are central to the meaning of a code-switched utterance can be relied on to pick out an ML where code-switching involves three to four linguistic systems.

Utterance 5 (a) and (b) reveals Scotton's model's inconsistency in analyzing code-switched data that involve more than two linguistic systems. Apart from the difficulty in sorting out the ML and EL in such an utterance, it is still uncertain to actually tell the language to which the producer of such an utterance lays claim. Could he be Bassa or Ewondo, or even Anglophone? This is difficult to answer. From the build-up of the utterance itself, it is only through

focus or the focal point of the utterance that one gets to understand that the dominant code in utterance 5 is Bassa and that the other three codes are ELs. Sentence focus could thus be discussed, in default of any other scientific definition, as the matrix of an utterance, which is not forcibly obtained from morpheme dominance.

Utterance 6: *lákî ì mễ gwễ raison wễ nû ù-sá'ámễ*
There that I have a reason you who SM pay me
(As I am right, it is up to you to compensate me)

Utterance 6 counts 10 morphemes, 9 of which are in Bassa, and 1 in French. In this regard, the ML is Bassa, and the EL, French. The utterance is thus dominantly Bassa in all respects. The French pattern "raison" obtained from the vital verb "avoir raison" brings to light some discussion about the authentic equivalent of this pattern in the Bassa language. The said equivalent is undergoing disuse and oblivion, so much so that in the entire Bassa linguistic configuration, each and every speaker uses "raison" in lieu of "pènâ". The uncode-switch equivalent of Utterance 6 is elicited in 6(a).

6(a): *lá kìí mễ nễt pènâ wễ nû ù-sá'á mễ*
There that I succeed discussion you who SM pay me
(As I have an upper hand in the discussion, it is you to compensate me)

The morphemes in 6(a) are equally 10 in number, with "nễt pènâ" appearing in lieu of "gwễ raison". According to Bot Ba Njock (1966) "raison" had existed in Bassa before the advent of French as a language of instruction in the community. It was conceived of from the perspective of taking an upper hand, or winning an opponent during a discussion or debate. However, in the course of time, this authentic form was replaced by "avoir raison", or "gwế raison", which is widely used even at village level. The change from "mè" to "mế" indicates a phonological alternation. Aside from syntactic and phonological alternations recorded, Utterances 6 and 7 reveal the dangers of Bassa vital lexical items that are falling into obeyance day in, day out. "nễt pènâ" is today replaced by "gwễ raison", and "nígá" has been taken over by "expliquer", and there are more such vital items that are disappearing in the course of time.

Utterance 7: *Û sômbó lè mế expliquer wè yɔ̂m î?*
SM want that me explain you thing that
(Do you want me to explain this/that thing to you?

There are 8 morphemes in Utterance 7: 7 of them are in Bassa, and 1 in French. Bassa is thus the ML in this utterance and French, the EL. The peculiarity with this utterance is that the French island "expliquer" is seen in its infinitive form whereas it would have been in the subjunctive if the utterance were produced in French. There is a gradual process of disuse of the authentic equivalent "nìgâ" by many Bassa native speakers, and this has far-reaching consequences on the language. The uninterlarded equivalent of Utterance 7 is elicited in 7(a)

7(a): *Û sômbó lè mè nìgâ wè yɔ̂m î*
SM want me teach you thing that
(Do you want me to teach, explain this/that thing to you?).

Like its counterpart above, 7(a) also counts 8 morphemes with no modification in form and contents. However, the personal pronoun in 7 "mè" is seen to undergo a change in tone modulation from "mè" to "mế" ([ˋ] ≠ [ˊ]). The one in 7 results from the insertion of "expiquer" and the one in 7 (a) is just the authentic Bassa personal pronoun in context.

Utterance 8: *bànà bôt bá yè ercrocs à vue d'œil*
These people SM be crooks to seeing of eye.
(These people are crooks to the seeing of the eye)

Utterance 8 is made up of 9 morphemes. 4 are in Bassa, and 5 in French. Although French dominates in morpheme frequency, there is room to admit that Bassa is the ML and French, the EL. The argument in favor of this is that the syntactic frame of the utterance is Bassa, with the subject "bànà bôt" and the verb form "yè" being in the language. The pattern "escros à vue d'œil" may not be very bearing on the structure of the utterance in the very manner in which the subject and verb are. Here again comes the notion of focus versus morpheme dominance. In the utterance, Bassa lexical items are 4, and those in French are 5, but the attention directing pattern is "bànà bôt" (These people). Therefore Bassa is the ML and French, the EL.
An authentic pattern of 8 is elicited in 8(a).

8(a): *bànà bôt bá yè bôt wip*
(These people are thieves)

Striped of French morphemes as above presented, Utterance 8(a) embodies 6 morphemes in a typical Bassa context. In comparative terms all the same, 8(a) does not portray the weight borne in 8 with French islands. There should be a much more authentic manner in rendering "à vue d'œil" in this Bantu language, but this too has fallen into abeyance like many related structures.

Utterance 9: *Û yê sans ignorer lè pûàh yèm à très stricte*
(You do not ignore the fact that my father is very strict).

Utterance 9 embodies 11 morphemes, 7 of which are in Bassa and 4 in French. Bassa is thus the ML from the standpoint of morpheme criterion and syntactic structure, while French is the EL. No alternations of any nature are recorded in this utterance. However, the actual syntactic structure of utterance 9 is calqued from French with "Tu es/vous êtes sans ignorer" taking the lead. The uncode-switched equivalent of 9 is elicited in 9 (a).

9(a): *Û ńyî lè pûà yễm à lễr lễ*
SM know that father my sm hard much
(You know that father is a very hard man).

In 9(a), there are 8 morphemes as opposed to 11 in 9. It stands to reason that code-switching often leads to overloading in word use. When 9 and 9(a) are compared, it is preferable to address an interlocutor in 9(a) than in 9. The French pattern "être sans ignorer" has thus found a comfortable place in Bassa, and is used on a more or less daily basis in lieu of "ńyî".

Utterance 10: *mût núnú à-cravater mè yâg mễ m-cravater ńyè*
(That person buttoned me, I also buttoned him)

Utterance 10 relates a conflict situation where two persons knotted each other. The reporter says he was held at the neck by someone, and he too held the person at the neck. The utterance contains 11morphemes, 9 of which are in Bassa and two in French. The morpheme frequency criterion thus retains Bassa as the ML and French, the EL. There is room to argue, however, that the focal point in this utterance is "cravater", which is in French. Also, the syntactic structure of the utterance is glaringly French. How are we then to consider Bassa as the ML even on the basis of the quantitative criterion? The authentic pattern of Utterance 10 is elicited in 10(a), perhaps to shed light on the above question.

Utterance 10(a): *mût núnú à gwêl mὲ yâg mὲ gwêl ńyὲ*
Person this this sm hold me too me hold him
(This man held me, and I too held him)

In terms of morpheme count, 10 and 10(a) are almost similar. No significant alternations of any nature are recorded in the two.

Utterance 11: *lá kìí û tὲlὲp hálâ mὲ ň-lâ bὲp wὲ aller et retour.*
(There as you are standing, I can beat you to and fro).

Utterance 11 embodies 13 morphemes, 10 of which are in Bassa and 3 in French. The ML in this utterance is Bassa and the EL, French. The context is borne in the French islands "Aller et Retour" may not be very glaring to any listener of Utterance 11. As such, it would sound preferable to resort to a much more authentic version of the utterance, which is elicited in 11(a).

11(a) *lá kìí û tὲlὲp hálâ mὲ ň-lâ bὲp wὲ ňgùèrà bá'â*
(There as you are standing, I can beat you two times).

11(a) counts 12 morphemes as opposed to the 13 in Utterance 11. The reporter in 11 indicates that in a fist with his opponent, he is able to defeat the said opponent a first time. When separated and put in the ring a second time, he will still be able to put down the opponent. If this process gives two fighting instances, then 11(a) is just right to render "aller et retour" as "ňgùèrà bá'â (two times).

Utterance 12: *mὲ lámá kê cependant nŏb à bôŋ lὲ mὲ prendre d'autres dispositions nǎ nɔ́*
(I was about to go, but the rain caused me to take other measures now)

There are 14 morphemes in Utterance 12. 9 of these are in Bassa, and 5 in French. By dint of morpheme frequency criterion, Bassa is the ML, and French, the EL. Arguably, the structure of Utterance 12 is both French and Bassa if the focus of the Utterance were to be considered. The French islands "Cependeant" and "prendre d'autres dispositions" are potent enough to lead one to admit that Utterance 12 is basically French. The equation becomes balanced when the Bassa islands are equally taken into consideration. Utterance 12 thus drives to the fact that the syntactic structure of a code-switched discourse sample may be difficult to determine even on grounds of morpheme dominance.

The authentic version of Utterance 12 is presented in 12(a) as follows;

12(a) *mὲ lama kê, ňdígî nɔ̂n à bôŋ lὲ mέ yɔ̂ŋ ǹ-ʤêl ì-mpὲ ǹânɔ̂*
(I was about to go, but the rain caused me to decide otherwise).

12(a) counts all together 13 morphemes in lieu of 14. French equivalents like "cependant" and "Prendre d'autres dispositions" have merely been interpreted to arrive at the meaning of the utterance. In spite of this, it is preferable to interpret than to code-switch or code-mix in language use.

Utterance 13: *Désordre í bê mû ňgàndâg, alors mὲ retirer mὲ mὲrὲ*
(There was much disorder there, so I decided myself to withdraw).

Utterance 13 is made up of 11 morphemes. Among these, there are 8 in Bassa and 3 in French. The ML in Utterance 13 is thus Bassa, and the EL, French. From a syntactic standpoint also, Utterance 13 is Bassa in all spheres. The authentic pattern of Utterance 13 is elicited in 13(a).

13(a): *ňtûngú í bê mû ňgàndâg hàlâ, mὲ ň-ŋɔri mû mὲ mὲrὲ*
(There was much disorder there, so I decided to withdraw from there).

Contrary to 13, 13 (a) exhibits 12 morphemes in a typical Bassa context. A curiosity worthy of note is that the tone shapes in the two utterances, the code-switched and the authentic one, are almost the same. Also, the syntactic structure of the utterance is similar.

In all, the code-switched Bassa-French data sets presented in this paper are illustrative of some incongruities noted with Scotton's model for analyzing code-switched forms. Such incongruities include the problem of singling out the ML and the EL in code-switched discourse samples with a 50/50 morpheme split, and that of code-switched or code-mixed discourse samples involving three or four linguistic systems. Some effects of language attrition gathered from Bassa-French data sets are thus presented in the following points.

Summary of effects
Morphological, phonological and syntactic alternations gathered from the code-switched data of this study are as follows.
➢ In utterance 1, there is an alternation between "yêm" and "wêm" in "petit-fils yêm" and "ǹlâl wêm"
➢ In utterance 2: there is also alternation between "yêm" and "mêm", "í" and "mà" in "Ecriture yɛm ì Yê "and" mâtìla mêm má yê.
➢ In utterance 3, there is "ì yê" that alternates with "bì yê in "rentrée scolaire ì yê" and "bitìmbî bì sùklû bì yê.

In the above 3 alternations, the SM, the PM and tone shapes are the areas affected, and these more or less tamper pretty much with the authenticity of Bassa as a natural language.

One other remarkable effect of code-switching on Bassa is the process of disuse of some vital verbs. A case in point is "gwě raison" (avoir raison) which is today perfectly accommodated in Bassa, and used by each and every speaker. The authentic pattern "nêt pêna" (to be right) is

relegated to secondary use and is suffering oblivion. Many such vital forms are treated in like manner. For example, the expression "bɔ̀ŋ se debrouiller" (to struggle on one's own) is preferred to the authentic from "ʤɔ". Thus, it isn't unusual to hear a Bassa speaker say: "ìsômbó lè á- bɔŋ se débrouller ɲ́yɛ̂ mɛ̀rɛ̀ (It warrants him to put in some effort or he/she needs to struggle on his/her own) in lieu of the authentic form "ì somb lɛ́ áʤɔ̂ ɲ́yɛ̂ mɛ̀rɛ̀". There has also been the case of "ɲ́ígá "(to teach/learn), which through code-switching, has surreptitiously been replaced by "expliquer".

Morpheme dominance versus focus

Prediction of the kinds of constituents that form the structure of switched or mixed codes is one of the merits of Scotton's MLF model. Morpheme dominance has interchangeably been used alongside the morpheme frequency criterion or the quantitative criterion. It may appear to be very glaring when the switched or mixed codes are just two. But even at this level, there appears to be mixed discourse where the morpheme frequency paradigm may prove insufficient to sort out the matrix and the embedded languages. Discourse samples with a 50/50 morpheme split have been proven to fall among such utterances. When samples are bits and pieces from three or four linguistic systems, it becomes inconsolably difficult for morpheme dominance to be used to arrive at the exact ML and EL in discourse samples. It is, therefore, suggested that focus be used to unravel such difficulty. Focus has sketchily be defined as the nucleus or the peak of an utterance in both structure and meaning. The focal point of an utterance is, indeed, the reference made by the producer of the utterance, albeit in the code-switched or code-mixed pattern, which cannot forcibly be detected from the standpoint of morpheme frequency of the utterance.

The present contribution has shown through examples drawn from switched or mixed utterances, that Scotton's MLF model, which has been tested on data involving French-Arabic and /or English-Swahili, is grossly inefficient to determine the ML and EL in utterances with a 50/50 morpheme split, and in utterances with 3 or more linguistic systems. In either case, the key to success is the focus, not morpheme dominance. The title "Beyond Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model" was coined in acknowledgment of the insufficiencies of Scotton's frame.

Concluding Remarks

Code-switching affects Bassa, like any other indigenous language in Cameroon, more than it does to French. The consequences of the former language may be far-reaching. There are fears that the kind of onslaught of French on a recipient language like Bassa may end up causing this language to deface beyond recognition, especially with regard to the younger generations who might never be offered the least opportunity to listen to and/or speak any authentic Bassa in the course of time.

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