

Linguistic Challenges and Adaptation Strategies for Migrants: The Case of IDPs in the West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract

Internal displacement due to violent conflict has been a persistent challenge in Cameroon's West Region. Beyond the physical and economic upheaval, displaced populations often face significant linguistic barriers when integrating into host communities. This makes communication difficult thereby resulting to communication breakdown. (Chiatoh & Tchakote, 2020). In this regard, this paper seeks to examine the linguistic challenges encountered by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the West Region and the adaptation strategies they employ to navigate their new linguistic environments, to determine whether culture influences linguistic acquisition. Hinged on Berry's (1997) Acculturation theory, 60 participants (30 males and 30 females) within the ages of 20-35 were purposely selected as respondents for the questionnaire. This paper contributes to a more holistic understanding of the challenges and adaptation strategies surrounding internal displacement in a linguistically diverse context like Cameroon's West Region. The findings reveal that 88% of IDPs in the West Region face significant linguistic challenges, primarily because the majority are English speakers residing in areas dominated by French and local dialects. This barrier results in a lack of information and restricted access to essential services. To overcome these obstacles, most respondents (89%) use translation apps and digital tools. These findings hold important implications for designing more effective and multilingual approaches to support the integration of displaced persons.

Key words: linguistic challenges, adaptation strategies, Internally Displaced Persons

1 Introduction

Migration is a universal phenomenon and people moved from one place to another for several reasons. Some reasons for migration include: poverty, war,

natural disasters etc. Whenever migration happens, it is accompanied by a major change in the cultural setup of both the migrants as well the members of the host community. Acculturation strategy has been pointed out as one of the main element in socio-cultural adaptation study. The classical definition of acculturation includes the main idea of the multicultural model as it said that, when people from two different cultures meet, it results in the change of the original culture patterns of either or both groups (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Acculturation deals with the process of psychological and cultural changes happening with the migrants as they live and mingle with the host community (Berry, 1997). The displacement of people due to conflict, natural disasters, or other crises is a global phenomenon that often results in significant linguistic and cultural barriers for those forced to migrate. This is particularly true for IDPs who relocate within their own countries, as they must navigate unfamiliar linguistic landscapes and adapt to new communicative forms. Cameroon is one of the countries that is currently facing a high level of fragility and migration due to conflict with mass displacement of persons due to the “Boko Haram” insurgency in the North and due to the crisis in the North West and South West Regions (Eweka & Olusegun, 2016). The West Region of Cameroon has experienced waves of internal displacement in recent years due to an ongoing conflict. As IDPs from the Anglophone regions have sought refuge in the francophone-dominant West Region, they face substantial linguistic hurdles in accessing public services, and maintaining their cultural and linguistic identities. (Martin, et al 2012), Adaptation strategy is the ability of individuals who are not members of a particular speech community to adapt to their natural languages and commonly accepted rules for their uses of a given geographical region. Also, refers to individual’s capacity to constructively regulate psycho-behavioural functions in response to new, changing, and/or uncertain circumstances, conditions and situations.

Hudson (1980) points out that linguistic adaptability cannot be treated in isolation without making reference to the cultural aspect of the speech community. According to him, cultural and linguistic adaptability is the ability of individuals to adapt to the natural language and commonly accepted rules for their use and also the cultures of a given geographical region. Owens (1996) posits that adaptation is the function or tendency of all organisms to change in

responses to the environment. He theorised that such adaptations were intellectual or cognitive as well as physical. While Crystal, (2000), was of the view that linguistic adaptation provides an interesting theoretical alternative to proposals of outright adoption. Simply classified, according to the National Geographical Marcopolo Xpeditions and the Human migration guide (2005, pp. 1-3), Migration is the movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence, usually across political boundaries. An example of semi-permanent residence would be the seasonal movement of migrant from one place to another. People can either choose to move, “voluntary migration” or be forced to move “involuntary migration”. Migration occurs at a variety of scales; intercontinental (between continents) and inter-regional or states. One of the most significant migration patterns has been rural to urban migration. Migration is of two forms; immigration and emigration. Emigration is the type of migration in which people leave their own country; that is movement out of the country while immigration is the movement of people into a new country with the intent to reside in that country. Language is important in the society as man needs it to communicate their ideas and experiences. As culture influences the structure and functions of a group so too does the language influence the individual interpretation of reality. Several types of push and pull factors may influence people in their movements such as:

1. Environment (climate, natural disaster)
2. Political (war)
3. Economic (work)
4. Cultural (religions freedom, education)

Bader & Hanadi (2015) are of the view that migration largely contributes to language contact and language change. The community of immigrants faces great challenges whether to keep their mother tongue actively in use, to shift to the dominant host language, or use their ethnic language alongside the dominant official language of the host country. They further point out that whenever speakers of two or more languages come together, a decision has to be made about which of the language is to be used. For Ayeomoni (2011, p. 45), “migration from one place to another has an effect on the language people speak. She further insists that migration could lead to a number of linguistic implications such as language borrowing, language shift, creation of a new language and language

endangerment. Herman (2005), explains that one of the causes of language shifts are the socio-economic circumstances which comprises of social and economic factors like migration into other communities, causing economic dependencies. Crystal (2006) argues that language choice is triggered by factors such as social status, gender, educational attainment, ethnicity, age, occupation, rural and urban origin, speakers, topic, place, media, and formality of the situation. Coulmas (1997) explains that people make linguistic choices for various purposes. Individuals and groups choose words, registers, styles, and language to suit their various needs concerning the communication of ideas, association with and separation from others, the establishment or defense of dominance.

2 Literature Review

This section examines previous works on linguistic challenges and adaptation strategies for migrants. Several works have been written by researchers in line with the topic under study.

2.1 The linguistic status of migrants

Adejumoke (2009) examines migration in Nigeria. He looks at the socio-economic context of migration in Nigeria and found out that immigration made an important contribution to Nigeria's recent economic growth. Again, there are indications that overall immigration has increased at a faster rate than emigration and that this increase coincided with economic growth. According to him, immigration into Nigeria has recently been increasing and the majority of immigrants are labour migrants, who have diverse educational characteristics. Educated labour migrants, who are limited in number, occupy the top administrative, professional and service posts in the country. There are fewer student immigrants than labour immigrants, with most of these students coming from Cameroon, Kenya and Sudan. Language barriers and related costs keep the number of student migrants low. Coming to the key drivers of migration, an education system with limited capacities is one of the push factors for highly skilled emigration. Other push factors relate to the labour market, the economy and demographic developments. This literature relates to the current study by illustrating how language barriers act as a systemic deterrent to socio-economic integration. Just as Adejumoke (2009) identifies language as a primary factor limiting student mobility and labour participation in Nigeria, this work

demonstrates how linguistic hurdles in Cameroon's West Region restrict IDP's access to essential services and dignified livelihoods.

Kiernan (2011) carried out a survey of Canadian multiculturalist policy, multilingualism, and post-secondary education in terms of multilingual immigrant student populations to describe the steps the federal government has taken to promote linguistic pluralism. Immigrants exhibit strong loyalty towards Canada, while still maintaining their cultural heritage, because Canada is shaped by the interaction of diverse and self-defined groups of people, varied and changing notions of identity, community and nation exist so as to enable belonging. Researchers of immigrant studies have found that in Canada few immigrant languages have survival rates of fifty percent or better. Moreover, first and second generation immigrants show marked differences in the ability to retain heritage languages. Despite Canada's multicultural ideologies, studies by Khan (2025) and Oniță (2020) suggest that Canada, like most westernized nations, maintains systemic expectations for new citizens to conform to dominant linguistic and Eurocentric norms.

Bader & Hanadi (2015) investigated language choice among Arabs in Quebec (largest french-speaking province located in eastern Canada). They also explored Arab attitude towards Arabic, French and English in particular and factors involved in using these languages. Results showed that Arabs of Quebec Canada have positive attitudes towards Arabic, French and English. They freely use their Arabic language in the domain of home and with family members, in worship places and when listening to the radio. In addition, they use English and French in governmental offices and formal applications and in educational institutions. Results also showed that Arabs of Quebec mix these languages in the domain of neighborhood, with friends and media

A research conducted by Bouchard (2012) on adult language classes in the city of Montreal, in which English, French and many other community languages coexist. Bouchard (2012) used class observations in five adult learning centres of the Centre de services scolaire de Montréal (CSSDM), which is a public organisation whose mandate is to organise educational services in schools and training centres to the multi-ethnic populations of Montreal. Interviews were conducted with the French tutors as well as with students who had completed the francisation programme. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with researchers and policy makers on language integration and social cohesion.

While onlookers have judged Québec's language legislation as coercive due to its 'unilingual' status, language policy had been based on the notions of interculturalism and social cohesion. Indeed, interculturalism, which was coined in Québec, aims to establish a path between assimilation and separation. Thus the emphasis is on encouraging participation in a 'common' culture while respecting rights of ethno-cultural diversity (Bouchard, 2012 p.50). Learners are encouraged to participate, contribute and help change what it means to be Québécois in a modern and multilingual society.

Brizić (2007) shows through her research that there is an intergenerational transfer of linguistic capital at work: parents who lived in a stable L1 context (e.g. had an opportunity to learn their language properly at school) will create better linguistic conditions for their children in all languages than those parents who themselves could not develop their L1 properly (like, for example, speakers of Kurdish in Turkey). There is an impact of the first language on second language acquisition for adult learners too. It is empirically verified that in their learning strategies adult language learners make more or less conscious use of comparing language structures and therefore the first and other languages spoken by learners need to be taken into consideration in the learning process of the second language. There are observations that learners who already speak several languages are highly aware of language usage and therefore are supposed to be "good language learners" (Hufeisen & Fouser 2005).

2.2 Challenges and Adaptation Strategies for Migrants in Cameroon

Israr et al. (2000) studied how health workers in Cameroon coped with the economic crises and the perceived effects of the crises on service quality. The focus group for the interviews for the studies was government and mission (church) health workers. The findings showed that Government health workers had experienced higher cuts in salaries than their mission counterparts; they no longer received allowances as well as incentives which were still available to mission workers who therefore appeared more demotivated. Most government and mission workers reported legal after-hours income-raising activities. Government workers frequently reported additional survival strategies such as the parallel selling of drugs, asking for extra charges for services as well as running private practices during normal working hours. This research relates to the present study by illustrating how systemic crises in Cameroon force

individuals to adopt unconventional survival strategies to navigate institutional fragility. While Israr et al. focus on the economic coping mechanisms of health workers, this work extends that logic to the linguistic adaptations IDPs must employ to secure essential services within similarly strained environments.

Also, a study conducted by Giyoh (2023) on the challenges and adaptation strategies of IDPs in Kumba Town, Cameroon precisely on habitation coping strategies employed by IDPs in Kumba Town. With the use of interviews, the results indicated that, 92 % of the respondents (23 of the 25 respondents) sometimes applied the strategy of purchasing less expensive foods. More so, 92 % of the respondents use the strategy of reducing the quantity of food consumed per meal. All the respondents used the strategy of reducing the number of meals eaten in a day. It was also found that 13 of the respondents (52%) rely on help from a friend and relative. More so, only 7 of the respondents sent household members to eat elsewhere apart from home. In addition, 13 of them consumed food held for the next season. This is because many of them could not gate access to their place of origin. Furthermore, 21 (84%) of the respondents restricted adults' consumption for small children to eat. Only 3 of the respondent send household members to beg to sustain the family. Finally, only 9 of them went out the entire day without eating. They said this was only occasionally. This research complements the present study by providing a comparative baseline for IDP's resilience within the Cameroonian context. While Giyoh focuses on physical survival through food-related coping mechanisms in Kumba, this work expands that analysis to the linguistic adaptation strategies required for social and economic survival in the West Region.

2.3 Relevance of Berry (1997) Acculturation theory to the Study (This topic has just appeared here. Is it theory or Review of Lit. Please take this to theory. Or rename as theoretical frame and discuss accordingly) (Justification available in the track change copy)

The relevance of Acculturation Theory, specifically Berry's (1997) model to the study of linguistic challenges and adaptation strategies among IDPs in the West Region of Cameroon is important because it provides a necessary framework for analysing the psychological and cultural processes behind language choice. This article investigates how Anglophone IDPs navigate a Francophone-dominant host community, which is the very essence of an

acculturative experience that is, the contact between two distinct cultural and linguistic groups resulting in changes to both. The theory helps move the analysis beyond simple language barriers to understand the strategies IDPs employ to resolve the dual challenges of maintaining their Anglophone identity/language and engaging with the Francophone host language/culture. By examining linguistic adaptation through the lens of Berry's four strategies (Integration, Assimilation, Separation, Marginalisation), the study can systematically determine whether the IDPs' approach to language acquisition is hindering or facilitating their overall psychological and social adjustment. The theory thus offers the explanatory power needed to link the micro-level behavior of language use to the macro-level outcomes of successful integration or continued displacement vulnerability.

3 Methodology

The participants of the study, the instrument used and the data analysis procedure are discussed in this section. The area of this study was the West Region of Cameroon, with attention paid to Displaced Persons from the North West Region. The researcher chose this area because it is one of the main host communities to internally displaced persons from the North West Region. Also, this region is chosen because its administrative and economic systems operate mostly in French thereby creating an ideal environment to measure linguistic barriers. Furthermore, the West Region's high concentration of IDPs allows for a diverse sample of participants with varied professional backgrounds. This ensures that the adaptation strategies observed are representative of a broad range of real-life social and economic interactions. To carry out this study, 60 participants (30 males and 30 females) within the ages of 20-35 were purposely selected as participants for the study. Purposefully selecting this group of participants is essential because they represent the most socially and economically active segment of the displaced population. Since these individuals are primary actors in the labour market and education, they face the most frequent linguistic contact with the host community thereby providing the most relevant data on adaptation.

Furthermore, the instrument and procedure used was the issuing of questionnaires to some internally displaced persons. This instrument was

centred on examining the linguistic challenges encountered by IDPs in the West Region and the adaptation strategies they employed to navigate their new linguistic environments, and to determine whether culture has an influence in hindering this linguistic acquisition. A questionnaire was chosen since some of the variables for this study such as perceptions and feelings of the participants could not be directly observed, such information is best collected by questionnaires (Touliatus & Compton, 1998). The researcher used questionnaires because they are cost-effective and allow participants sufficient time to provide their responses. To ensure clarity, the researcher personally administered the questionnaire during a volunteering activity with a team distributing food and basic needs to IDPs in Fouban. This direct approach accommodated the participants' diverse educational backgrounds, which ranged from Ordinary Levels to Master's degrees. By integrating data collection with humanitarian aid, the researcher established trust and achieved a high response rate among the displaced population. Key sections included demographics, communication barriers, access to essential services, specific adaptation strategies used to navigate the new linguistic environment etc.

4 Results and Discussion of Findings

This section focuses on findings: data presentation, interpretation and analysis in relation to the research objectives

4.1 Demographic and Personal Information

The first part of the questionnaire required informants to indicate their genders, age ranges and levels of education.

Table 1: Respondents' gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Female	30	50%
Male	30	50%
Total	60	100%

Source; personal computation (this information is obvious from the method section, this is hardly a finding!) (Justification in the track change copy)

The results on table 1 shows that, both the male and female gender were involved in the data sample. There were 30 males and 30 females which is a 50/50 percentage of the population sample. This was done on purpose so that the findings of this research should be representative enough.

Table 2: Ages of respondents

Age range	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
20-25	Male	9	15%
	Female	13	22%
26-30	Male	13	22%
	Female	11	18%
31-35	Male	8	13%
	Female	6	10%
Total		60	100%

Source; personal computation

After collecting information about their gender, our respondents were required to indicate their age ranges. The results on table 2, shows the age range of the respondents. 22 respondents (9 males and 13 females) which made up 37% (15% + 22%) out the total sample were of the age group 20 to 25, 24 respondents (13 males and 11 females who made up 40% (22% + 18%) were of the age group 26 to 30 and 14 (8 males and 6 females) who made up 23 % (13% + 10%) were of the age group 31 to 35 (this information is obvious from the method section, this is hardly a finding!) (Justification in the track change copy)

Table 3: Educational levels of respondents

Educational levels	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Male	0	0%

First School Leaving Certificate	Female	0	0%
Ordinary Level	Male	2	3%
	Female	4	7%
Advance Level	Male	8	13%
	Female	9	15%
Degree	Male	17	28%
	Female	12	20%
Masters	Male	3	5%
	Female	5	8%
PhD	Male	0	0%
	Female	0	0%
Total		60	100%

Source; personal computation

The results on table 3, shows the educational level of the respondents. 6 respondents (2 males and 4 females) which made up 10% (3% + 7%) out the total sample had Ordinary level certificate, 17 respondents (8 males and 9 females who made up 28% (13% + 15%) had Advance level certificate, 29 (17 males and 12 females) who made up 48 % (28% + 20%) had Degree, 8 (3 males and 5 females) who made up 13 % (5% + 8%) had Masters and there were no respondents with PhD and First School Leaving certificates.

These demographic variables are essential because they dictate how IDPs navigate linguistic barriers. Age influences social mobility and learning speed, while gender reveals distinct survival challenges in public and private spheres. Educational level is key as academic backgrounds often determine the digital skills needed for effective linguistic adaptation.

Table 4: Primary language of respondents

This section was aimed at getting the primary languages of the respondents. The results are indicated below

Responses	Male	Female
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	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Number of Respondents	Percentage
English	30	50%	30	50%
French	0	0%	0	0%
Total	30	100%	30	100%

Source; personal computation

The results on table 4 show the primary languages of the respondents. From the findings, all males and females (60) respondents all chose English as their primary language thereby giving a 100% to English.

Table 5: Respondents' proficiency level in English

This section was aimed at getting the proficiency levels of the respondents. The results are indicated below

Responses	Male		Female	
	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Not proficient	0	0%	0	0%
Proficient	24	40%	23	38%
Very proficient	6	10%	7	12%
Total	30	100%	30	100%

Source; personal computation

The results on table 5 indicate the proficiency levels of the respondents. From the results, 24 males who make up (40%) confirmed to be proficient in English and 23 females who make up (38%) confirmed to be proficient in English. 6 males who make up (10%) said they are very proficient in English and 7 females who make up (12%) said they are very proficient in English. The results show that, the respondents are either proficient or very proficient in English. Thereby giving a 100% to English

Table 6: Difficulties communicating with locals in host communities

This section was meant to know whether respondents experience difficulties communicating with locals of their host community. The results are indicated below

Responses	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	Male	26	43%
	Female	27	45%
No	Male	4	7%
	Female	3	5%
Total		60	100

Source; personal computation

The respondents were required to indicate whether they experience difficulties communicating with locals of their host community. The results on table 6 show 53 respondents (26 males and 27 females) which made up 88% (43% + 45%) of the total sample agreed that they experience difficulties, 7 respondents (4 males and 3 females who made up 12% (7% + 5%) out the total sample said they do not face difficulties communicating with locals of their host community.

When asked to describe the nature of the difficulties experienced by those who confirmed to have experienced some, these are some of the samples gotten:

Males: Difficulties in understanding one another, difficulties in communicating and difficulties in expressing themselves.

Females: Difficulties in communicating and sharing ideas, difficulties in purchasing items, getting locations and difficulties in socializing.

Table 7: The extent to which language barriers affect respondents' access to information and services

Responses	Male		Female	
	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Rarely	1	2%	1	2%
Often	27	45%	24	40%

Never	0	0%	0	0%
A little	2	3%	5	8%
Total	30	100%	30	100%

Source; personal computation

The results on table 7 show the extent to which language barriers affect respondents' access to information and services. From the findings, 2 respondents (1 male and 1 female) who made up a total of 2% said language barriers rarely affect their access to information and services. 51 respondents (27 males and 24 females) who made up 85% (45% + 40%) of the respondents said language barriers often affect their access to information and services meanwhile, 7 respondents (2 males and 5 females) who made up 11% (3% + 8%) said language barriers affect their access to information and services just a little.

Table 8: Misunderstanding experienced as a result of cultural and linguistic differences

Responses	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	Male	28	47%
	Female	26	43%
No	Male	2	3%
	Female	4	7%
Total		60	100

Source; personal computation

The respondents were required to indicate if they experienced misunderstanding as a result of cultural and linguistic differences. The results shows that 54 respondents (28 males and 26 females) which made up 90% (47% + 43%) of the total sample said yes they experience misunderstanding, 6 respondents (2 males and 4 females who made up 10% (3% + 7%) out the total sample said they do not experience misunderstanding as a result of cultural and linguistic differences.

Table 9: Whether steps have been taken to learn the local language

Responses	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	Male	28	47%
	Female	26	43%
No	Male	2	3%
	Female	4	7%
Total		60	100

Source; personal computation

The respondents were required to indicate the steps they took in learning the local language. The results shows that 54 respondents (28 males and 26 females) which made up 90% (47% + 43%) of the total sample confirmed to have taken some steps, 6 respondents (2 males and 4 females who made up 10% (3% + 7%) out the total sample said they have not taken any steps to learn the local language.

Table 10: Methods used in learning the local language

Responses	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Formal classes	Male	3	5%
	Female	2	3%
Informal conversations	Male	26	43%
	Female	23	38%
Total		54	100%

Source; personal computation

Those who indicated to have taken steps in learning the local language were required to indicate the methods they used in learning the local language. The results shows that 5 respondents (3 males and 2 females) which made up 8% (5% + 3%) of the total sample said they use formal education while 49 respondents (26 males and 23 females who made up 81% (43% + 38%) out the total sample said they use informal conversations to learn the local language.

Table 11: Whether Support had been received from the host community in overcoming language barriers

Responses	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	Male	7	12%
	Female	11	18%
No	Male	23	38%
	Female	19	32%
Total		60	100

Source; personal computation

The respondents were required to indicate if they have received support from the host community in overcoming language barriers. The results shows that 18 respondents (7 males and 11 females) which made up 30% (12% + 18%) of the total sample said yes they received support from the host community while 42 respondents (23 males and 19 females who made up 70% (38% + 32%) out the total sample said they have not received support from the host community in overcoming language barriers.

Table 12: The use of apps or tools in language translation

Responses	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	Male	26	43%
	Female	23	38%
No	Male	4	7%
	Female	7	12%
Total		60	100

Source; personal computation

The respondents were required to indicate if they use apps or translation tools in translating. The results shows that 49 respondents (26 males and 23 females) which made up 81% (43% + 38%) of the total sample confirmed to using apps and other tools in translating such as google translate, duolingo, Chat GPT, Meta AI and Poe, while 11 respondents (4 males and 7 females who made up 19% (7% + 12%) out the total sample said they have do not use apps or tools in translating.

4.2 Discussion of Finding

The results presented above indicated that most of the respondents have some certain level of education and they all speak English (Tables 2, 3, and 4). Majority which is 88% of the respondents, experience difficulties talking with people from the host community (Table 6) while majority indicated difficulties in understanding the local language and expressing themselves, and simply socialising. This ties with works carried out by (Block, 2008; Piller, 2017). Based on their research, they provided a context on how linguistic challenges in host communities create barriers to social integration thereby resulting in unequal communication. Language barriers are a major problem for displaced groups especially those from the West Region of Cameroon, making it hard for displaced groups to fit in and feel well. Since all the respondents speak English as their primary language and none speak French, it creates a communication gap in Cameroon's West Region, which uses both English and French, along with many other local languages. This language difference clearly leads to issues in daily life, like purchasing items, locating places, getting general information and access to services, as indicated by some respondents.

Furthermore, the study found that language barriers significantly block IDPs from getting important information and services. A greater majority of 85% said these barriers "often" affect them (Table 7). This supports what researchers like Schey (2005) and Crisp (2009) said about not speaking the local language can severely limit displaced people's access to healthcare, education, legal help, and jobs, making their situation even harder. The IDPs shared examples of losing chances, struggling to get help, facing negative opinions (stereotypes), and even seeing French speakers favoured in schools. These examples show serious disadvantages caused by language differences. Also, a vast majority of the respondents which is (90%) experienced misunderstandings because of cultural and language differences (Table 8). This suggests that language is more than just words; it is tied to culture and social acceptance. Misunderstandings can lead to people feeling left out or stigmatized, as highlighted by Gumperz (1982).

Despite these major language challenges faced by the IDPs in the West Region, majority are actively working on some adaptation strategies. With a majority (90%) who indicated that they employed certain strategies in learning the local language, mostly by having informal conversations (81%) rather than

taking formal classes (Tables 9 and 10). Conversely, the reported linguistic frustrations and obstacles in accessing services could lead to a separation strategy, where IDPs retreat into their Anglophone networks, or even marginalisation, where they fail to connect with either culture, leaving them highly vulnerable. While learning through talking can be helpful for basic communication, it might not lead to full language mastery compared to more structured learning, as studies on how people learn new languages naturally have shown (Krashen, 1985). Also, the findings indicate that 70% of respondents said they received no help from the local community in overcoming linguistic challenges (Table 11). While some mentioned that, they get help from neighbors, the general lack of organized support points to a big gap in aid efforts for displaced people. On a positive note, 81% of IDPs use digital tools like Google Translate and Duolingo (Table 12) in overcoming linguistic challenges. This shows their use of technology to overcome language gaps, which is a growing trend in migration situations (Betts & Collier, 2017).

5 Conclusion

This study shows that IDPs in Cameroon's West Region face major linguistic challenges, primarily because most are English speakers in areas with French and local languages. These language barriers cause major problems such as difficulties in locating areas, limited or no access to information and services thereby leading to misunderstandings, lost opportunities, and even social isolation. While many IDPs bravely try to adapt by learning local languages through informal conversations and using translation apps, they lack organized support from host communities as indicated by the results. This research highlights that more effective, multilingual strategies are desperately needed to truly help displaced populations integrate. Addressing these language issues is key to improving the well-being of IDPs in such diverse settings.

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