

A Sociolinguistic Survey Among the Bakossi

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REFERENCES

The following is a report on the sociolinguistic survey conducted January 7–25, 1991 in the Bangem and Tombel Sub-Divisions of the Meme Division, South=West Province, Cameroon.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BRIEF HISTORY

In order to put the language situation in perspective, we include here some historical background information taken from *The Tradition of a People: Bakossi* by Edjedepang-Koge (1986).

The general name “Bakossi has come to refer to the people on the immediate western and eastern slopes of Mount Mwanenguba and Mount Kupe who share Ngoe as a common ancestor. According to oral tradition, Ngoe is said to have “appeared on Manenguba Mountain.” He and his wife settled on the western slopes at Mwekan and had many children, the number and birth order differing according to oral traditions of the various clans. From these slopes their offspring migrated to different areas. However, two sons, Anngoe (Nninong) and Ngemengoe (Bangem), remained with their father in the north.

One son, Asomengo, was prompted by a family clash to move southward, occupying land which stretched from a little south of Muambong to the Ngomelenge (Efoto) River (near Mambanda), and from Mount Kupe in the east to the Mungo River in the west. Some of Aso Mengo’s children, however, remained north. Over time, some lines of descendants aligned themselves with Anongoe’s children (Nninong) at Elom, becoming the “Elom-e-Nninong.” The others who insisted on their original identity became known as “Elom-e-Muetan.”

Another son, Kaahmogue (Elung), clashed continually with his brothers in his pursuit of land. Among Kaahnogue’s children, however, there were two groups of “deserters” who wanted to settle and stop fighting: the Elung (who remained in the area) and the Balong (who migrated farther south).

According to one tradition, the Nhia were those who left the Nninong clan to gain land in the highlands (present day villages of Mwabi, Poala and Ekambeng). It is said by some that the Elung clashed with the Nhia and nearly brought them to extinction—a claim that both the Nhia and Elung deny. In fact, the Nhia and Elung themselves say that there was never strife between them for lang. The Nhia also refuse to acknowledge that they are of Nninong origin and instead insist that their origin is from Ngoe through Kaahngoe (Elung). Today relations between Nhia and Elung are more cordial and fraternal than between Nhia and Nninong.

After the various brothers had migrated, there was a lack of cohesion among the descendants of Ngoe due to internal conflicts. The coming of the Europeans caused additional conflict, first between chiefs and colonial administrators, but particularly between clans. Bakossi from Nyasoso helped the Germans defeat the Bakossi of Mwasundem and the Nninong helped the Germans defeat Ellung, events that resulted in strong enmity between these clans.

After World War I, Cameroon was given by a League of Nations mandate to the French and British governments. The dividing line passed through Bakossi land and continual changes brought confusions, divisions, interclan and intertribal difficulties. Independence followed for the French sector and the time of Cameroon’s reunification in which there was intense bitterness between opponents and supporters of the reunification within the Bakossi.

As early as 1936 the setting up of a combined appeals court set the stage for the unity of at least some of the sons of Ngoe under a single administration. In 1953, all of Bakossi came together under one indigenous authority known as Kumba Eastern Area Federation. In 1963, the “Bangem” District was created incorporating all of Bakossi, but in 1968 this was split into Bangem (Northern Bakossi) and Tombel (Southern Bakossi). In 1977, the common Bakossi Council for these two areas was also split into Bangem (Northern Bakossi) and Tombel (Southern Bakossi).

Bakossi share ancestry with the Bafaw, Bakundu, Balong, Bassossi, Mbo, Abo, Miamilo, Baneka, Muaneman, Muange, Bareko, Bakaka, Babong, Balondo, Manahas, Bongkeng, and Bakem.

1.2 DIALECT SITUATION

The Atlas linguistique de l’afrique centrale (ALCAM) (1983) and the Ethnologue” Languages of the world (1988) list several speech varieties of Bakossi. The results of lexicostatistical analyses done by Robert Hedinger (1983) have grouped these speech varieties into one language, sharing at least eighty percent cognates.

	ALCAM	Ethnologue	Hedinger
language name	Akoose	Akoose	Akossi
	Bakossi	-Southern Bak	-Akoose
	Western Bak	-Western Bak	
	Northern Bak	-Northern Bak	-Ngemengoe
	Nninong	-Nninong	-Nninong
	Mwambong	-Mwambong	
	Elung	-Elung	-Elung
	Mwamenam	-Mwamenam	

A summary of Hedinger's lexicostatistical results for these speech varieties is below (percent of cognates based on 200 word list).

	Ako	Nne	Elu	Nge	Mwn
Ako	*	90	80	81	87
Nne	*	*	85	83	87
Elu	*	*	*	82	80
Nge	*	*	*	*	82
Mwn	*	*	*	*	*

(Ako = Bakossi, Nne = Nninong, Elu = Elung, Nge = Ngemengoe, Mwn = Mwanenam)

1.3 PAST WORK IN BAKOSSI

Robert and Sylvia Hedinger carried out research on the Bakossi language between 1974 and 1981. they did in-depth study of various aspects of the language structure and have published papers on the phonology, morphology, and grammar of Bakossi. (See *Bibliography of SIL in Cameroon* SIL, 1988). They also proposed an orthography, produced a guide for learning to read and write the language, and compiled a booklet of traditional stories.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The key issues the survey addressed are:

- Should the Bakossi language be developed?
- If so, which variety should be used as the reference dialect?

In order to answer these questions several other issues must first be examined:

- Level of multilingualism: What is the level of bilingualism in English and/or Pidgin in the Bakossi speech community? In Douala? In French?
- Language vitality: Are the Bakossi in a language maintenance or a language shift situation?
- Intelligibility: What is the level of comprehension among the varieties of Bakossi?
- Language attitudes: What is the attitude of the Bakossi toward having their language developed? Is there one variety which they would prefer for the reference dialect? Is one seen as more prestigious?
- Written materials: What is the extent/distribution of written materials in Bakossi?

The issues of level of multilingualism, language vitality, and attitudes are pertinent to the question of whether or not Bakossi should be developed. Those of intelligibility, attitudes and extent of written materials are pertinent to the question of which variety should be used as a reference dialect.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 SURVEY LOCATION

The survey was conducted in the Tombel Subdivision among speakers of Lower Bakossi, and in the Bangem Subdivision among speakers of Upper Bakossi, Nninong and Elung/Nhia. We are using the term “Ellung/Nhia” because most of the people interviewed from that area were from the Nhia clan, but the sources listed above refer to the variety in that area as “Ellung.” We have adopted the terms “Upper Bakossi” and “Lower Bakossi” as used by people in the area to refer to Bangem and Tombel Subdivisions respectively.

2.2 SUBJECT SELECTION

- Letters of introduction were sent to the Subdivision Officers of Bangem and Tombel.
- Visits were made to the Subdivision Officers to request help.
- The Subdivisional Officers wrote letters of recommendation to the chiefs of the proposed villages.
- Chiefs were visited, the research was explained, request was made for subjects according to the predetermined social categories, and time for interviews was set up.
- A final visit was made and questionnaires II and III and the bilingual questionnaire were administered to the subjects questionnaire I was not administered—it is for background information).

2.3 QUESTIONNAIRE II

Purpose: to obtain the views of native speakers as to the extension of each of the dialects of their language, the type of linguistic differences between the varieties, and the perceived ease of difficulty in comprehension, and the locations of neighboring languages.

Procedure: several people, usually older men, are interviewed in each dialect area. A map of the area is used in conjunction with the questionnaire to aid in determining the perceived language/dialect boundaries.

2.4 QUESTIONNAIRE III

Purpose: to determine

- which languages an individual speaks or understands and an estimated level of proficiency,
- which languages are used with various interlocutors and in different social situations,
- what attitudes exist toward reading and writing the various dialects of Bakossi and toward the use of Bakossi in the schools.

Procedure: usually one to four individuals were questioned at a time, but on a few occasions, a group consensus was taken due to time pressure either on the survey team or the subjects. A group consensus was taken in Muelong (Elung speech variety) where we met with representatives of Muelong, Muasum, and Muabi.

Where tested? Due to time restraints, we restricted our survey to the Bangem and Tombel Subdivisions and did not include the Bakossi speakers in the Littoral or West Provinces. According to Hedinger’s (1983) analysis, the varieties in these areas—Akoose (Upper and Lower Bakossi), Nninong and Elung—have a level of at least eighty percent shared cognates. We administered questionnaires in the following villages in the four speech areas: Upper Bakossi (Tent’Asume, Muambong I), Nninong (Muebah, Nkack), Elung/Nhia (Poala, Ekambeng including people from Mbat, and Muelong including people from Moabi and Muasum), and Lower Bakossi (Mbule, Nyasoso, and Ndom). For each speech variety we chose at least two villages based on the recommendations of the Subdivisional Officers in order to get a representative sample.

Who? It was hypothesized that differences in language attitudes, language proficiency and exposure to various dialects/languages might be related to an individual’s gender, age and/or position in the community (i.e., whether an individual is more or less influential). Based on this hypothesis we decided to use the following as independent variables, related to subject selection:

- male/female
- age—15–35 and 36–67

The two age brackets were determined by the potential influence of Douala taught in the primary schools. It was not taught in schools after 1960. therefore, those in the younger group would not have had any exposure to Douala in the school system, while the older group would have had exposure if they attended school. We wanted to interview people between the ages of 15 and 55. However, because we did not always have control over subject selection, we had thirteen subjects between the ages of 56 and 67.

- less influential/more influential

This category was based on a person's schooling (if they had any secondary school or not), profession (if they had any secondary school or not), profession (e.g., a civil servant would be more influential) and/or their parent's social level (e.g., some had a parent who was a teacher).

We will use the following abbreviations throughout this report:

LB = Lower Bakossi	M = male	LI = less influential
UB = Upper Bakossi	F = female	MI = more influential
E = Elung/Nhia	Y = younger: 15–35	
N = Nninong	O = older: 36–67	

The chart below shows the number of subjects in the various categories for each speech variety.

	M LI	M MI	F
Lower Bakossi			
Y	6	6	4
O	4	4	4
Nninong			
Y	2	4	7
O	6	4	6
Upper Bakossi			
Y	5	2	6
O	7	5	3
Elung			
Y	6	5	5
O	6	2	5

2.5 BILINGUALISM QUESTIONNAIRES

Purpose: to find out if individuals were proficient enough in English and/or Pidgin to use written materials in one of these languages. We also asked some subjects about Douala and/or French.

Procedure: We administered the questionnaire to those individuals who reported that they could speak English and/or Pidgin (or sometimes Douala or French) at a "well" or "average" level. The questionnaire is adapted from the U.S. Foreign Service Institute (FSI) Testing Kit. The test is administered orally. It tests for five levels of proficiency. Each question has to be answered by "yes" or "no." A copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendix.

Where tested? The bilingualism proficiency questionnaire was administered at every test point of all four dialect areas.

2.6 GROUP INTERVIEWS, ORIENTATION COURSE, OBSERVATIONS, INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS

In addition to the questionnaires described above, we collected data in several other ways. Due to time limitations, the way in which the chiefs had organized the people, and/or the size of the group, it was sometimes necessary to administer group rather than individual interviews. The items of the questionnaires were used in its set

order or in a more random approach, following the topic of conversation. The responses were recorded either on the questionnaires or in note form.

In November 1990, a group of SIL members stayed with families in the Lower Bakossi area for three weeks as part of the orientation course for new Africa-assigned members. They agreed to do some observations for us related to language attitudes and language usage. We provided them with a list of questions to guide their observations and they noted the information on the designated forms.

As a preparatory phase of our survey we had informal talks with Mr. Ejedpang-Koge, author of *The Tradition of a People: Bakossi* and Robert and Sylvia Hedinger who have published on Bakossi linguistics. During our stay in Bakossi, we had talks with Subdivisional officers, chiefs, pastors, teachers, students, and other Bakossi people.

The information acquired as described above will be discussed in this report when applicable.

3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of our survey will be reported in addressing the issues raised above in the research questions: level of multilingualism, language vitality, intelligibility, language attitudes, and extent/distribution of written materials.

3.1 LEVEL OF MULTILINGUALISM

In this section we address the questions:

- what is the level of bilingualism in English and in Pidgin in the Bakossi community? In Douala? In French?

We will first report our findings in chart form, and then discuss them later. The following chart gives the responses to the questions (numbers refer to questionnaire III):

Q1.7a: What other languages do you speak now? Do you speak them well, average, or just a little bit?

The percentages represent those who reported speaking the various languages “well” or “average.”

	Total	English	Pidgin	Douala	French
MY/MI	(17)	16 (94%)	13 (76%)	1 (06%)	8 (47%)
MY/LI	(19)	16 (84%)	17 (89%)	0 (0%)	8 (42%)
MO/MI	(15)	12 (80%)	12 (80%)	9 (60%)	2 (13%)
MO/LI	(23)	15 (65%)	17 (74%)	6 (26%)	3 (13%)
FY	(22)	13 (59%)	17 (77%)	0 (0%)	3 (14%)
FO	(18)	2 (11%)	11 (61%)	4 (22%)	0 (0%)

Results grouped by age levels:

15–35	(58)	45 (78%)	47 (81%)	1 (2%)	19 (33%)
36–67	(56)	29 (52%)	38 (68%)	19 (34%)	5 (9%)

We also asked the subjects which languages they understand but do not speak. No one reported high or average receptive competence with out productive competence in English or Pidgin.

As a cross-check, we compared answers given in 1.7a and 2.1 and 2.2 (receptive competence) and 2.3 and 2.4 (productive competence). The following charts show the percentage of positive responses by age level to both of the questions listed.

Q 2.1 Are you always able to understand heated arguments (palavers) between two people who are speaking in (x)?

Q 2.2 Are you always able to understand jokes and proverbs in (x)?

	English	Pidgin	Douala
15–35	71%	72%	0%
36–67	50%	63%	27%

Q 2.3 Can you always find the words to express your thoughts in (x)?

Q 2.4 Let us say you are in a village (x) and see a fight between two people. The customary court in that village summons you to tell them what you saw. Could you describe in detail exactly what you saw using only (x)?

	English	Pidgin	Douala
15–35	71%	72%	0%
36–67	50%	63%	23%

The results of the bilingualism questionnaires are as follows:

English

	MY(MI)	MY(LI)	FY	MO(MI)	MO(MI)	FO
Total #	(17)	(19)	(22)	(15)	(23)	(18)
FSI level						
1						
1+	1					
2	1	1	2	1		
2+						
3	1	1				
3+	1					
4	3	2	3	2		
4+	8	10	3	10	8	
5	4	3	3	2	4	

Pidgin

	MY(MI)	MY(LI)	FY	MO(MI)	MO(MI)	FO
Total #	(17)	(19)	(22)	(15)	(23)	(18)
FSI level						
1						
1+						
2	1					
2+	1					
3	1	4				
3+	1					
4	1	1				
4+	1	1	4	2	1	3
5	3	2	1			

Before analyzing these result we need to make a few comments. The questions 1.7, 2.1–2.4 are designed to give us an indication of productive and receptive competence in a second language (L2) at a community level. The data are self-reported and so indicate the persons' own estimate of his/her speaking or comprehension ability, i.e., whether he/she speaks or understands the language in question “well,” “average,” or “low” proficiency respectively.

The results must be interpreted carefully, however, because the subject may not be used to rating his/her/own language ability, and terms such as “well,” “average,” or “just a bit” are relative.

The bilingualism questionnaire was not administered to everyone. Some older participants had trouble hearing, and we did not continue after administering questionnaire III. For some we judged their competence to be too low based on responses given to items in questionnaire III. We did not administer both the English and Pidgin questionnaires to each individual. We would recommend administering both if the survey were to be repeated.

We had some reservations about the bilingualism questionnaire:

- some questions are inappropriate for Pidgin, e.g., references made to “native speakers.”
- it is doubtful that people really understood some items in English, e.g., “using only English, can you change the way you talk depending on whether you are talking to educated people, friends, those who work for you?”
- some items need to be adjusted for Cameroonian English, e.g., references to native speakers.
- the people chosen to participate in the survey were often hand-picked by chiefs. This factor may affect the language proficiency results if more educated people were chosen in general, but we have no way to check this.

Results for English proficiency:

Men versus women:

- Combining the MY(MI), MY(LI), and MO(MI) categories, 44/51 (86%) reported that they have high or average speaking proficiency in English.
- The reported speaking proficiency in English for the MO(LI) category (15/23, 65%) is the lowest among the four male groups.
- Slightly over half of the FY reported that they had high or average speaking proficiency (13/22, 59%), while only 2/18 (11%) older females reported the same. Both of these women live in the lower Bakossi area.

Younger versus older:

- Using an age break based on when English became the language of instruction in the schools, 78% (45/58) of the younger group versus 52% (29/56) of the older group reported a high or average speaking proficiency. Especially the FO and the MO(LI) contributed to the lower percentage of English proficiency in the category of older subjects.
- Based on administration of the bilingualism questionnaire, 30/33 of the MY tested had FSI levels 4, 4+, or 5. The other three who were not tested reported high English speaking proficiency. One had English as L1.
- 9/11 of the FY had FSI levels 4, 4+ OR 5. Of the eleven who were not tested, seven reported having low or no English proficiency. The other four spoke Pidgin better than English and were given the test for Pidgin proficiency.
- 25/27 of the MO tested had an FSI level of 4, 4+ or 5. Of the eleven not tested, eight had a low or no proficiency in English or spoke Pidgin better than English. Two had hearing difficulties, and for one our time was too limited to complete the test.
- Out of the eighteen FO, two tested at FSI levels 1+ and 2. All the others had too low of an English proficiency for the test.
- In comparing the answers to 1.7a with 2.1–2.2 and 2.3–2.4, the results are fairly consistent regarding that which people report for general language ability and specific productive and receptive functions.

Results for Pidgin proficiency:

- Among men 59/74 (80%) claim a high or average proficiency in Pidgin as well as English.
- Among the FY more reported high or average Pidgin ability than English ability (17/22, 77% versus 13/22, 59%) while the difference is even more pronounced for older women (11/18, 61% versus 2/18, 11%).
- For those given the bilingualism questionnaire, 20/23 had an FSI level of 4, 4+ or 5. Many subjects were not tested because we gave them the bilingualism questionnaire for English instead. Some of the older women were not tested because their reported ability on questionnaire III was low.

Results for French proficiency:

The highest percentage of reported French ability is among the MY group with 16/36 (44%) saying they can speak French well or average. Some had gone to school in a French-speaking area.

It may be that French for the younger males is taking up the same function as Douala for the older males, that is, as a language of wider communication (lingua franca).

Summary: Douala, Pidgin and French proficiency:

- Subjects in all categories except MY showed the same or a higher level of proficiency in Pidgin as in English.
- Douala is almost only spoken by the older age group.
- French is mainly spoken by the younger age group.

3.2 LANGUAGE VITALITY

The question to be addressed in this section is:

- Are the Bakossi in a language maintenance or language shift situation?

In order to answer this question, we will examine the responses to the pertinent items on questionnaire III.

Q 1.6. What language(s) did you speak at home when you were a child? Which one did you speak first?

The following chart shows which language(s) was (were) used first at home. The responses are divided in 3 groups. The first 2 columns show if Bakossi or Bakossi and another language were used, the last column notes the cases in which Bakossi was not used as first language in the home.

English

	MY(MI)	MY(LI)	FY	MO(MI)	MO(MI)	FO
Total #	(17)	(19)	(22)	(15)	(23)	(18)
FSI level						
1						
1+	1					
2	1	1	2	1		
2+						
3	1	1				
3+	1					
4	3	2	2	1		
4+	8	10	4	10	8	
5	4	3	3	2	4	

Pidgin

	MY(MI)	MY(LI)	FY	MO(MI)	MO(MI)	FO
Total #	(17)	(19)	(22)	(15)	(23)	(18)
FSI level						
1						
1+						
2	1					
2+	1					
3	1	4				
3+	1					
4	1	1				
4+	1	1	4	2	1	3
5	3	2	1			

In the home domain Bakossi is definitely the primary language used. Out of the 114 subjects, 98 (86%) used just the vernacular as L1, while 11% spoke Bakossi primarily plus another language (English, Pidgin or Douala). Only 3 out of 114 (3%) spoke just a language other than Bakossi in the home—two of them were sons of teachers. Note a tendency in Lower Bakossi area for use of another language beside Bakossi in the home.

Q1.11 What language(s) do/did your father and mother speak with each other?

Only three out of 114 subjects (3%) reported that their parents spoke Pidgin and/or English with each other. Those three were in the younger age group: two in Lower Bakossi, one in upper Bakossi.

Q 2.5 What language(s) do you speak most often with your husband / wife(ves)? What do they speak with you?

Out of seventy-eight subjects, seventy-four (95%) reported that they have the same variety of Bakossi as their spouse, and one reported having different varieties of Bakossi. These all reported using Bakossi with each other. Only two out of eighty-eight subjects (2%) reported the use of English or French. None reported Pidgin used between husband and wife.

Q 2.5 What language(s) do you speak with friends the same age? (from your language)

The following chart shows the response to this question according to age levels.

		B	B/P	B/E/P	B/E/P/F	P/E
Lower Bakossi	Y (18)	4	1	3	7	3
	O (12)	9	1	1		1
Upper Bakossi	Y (13)	3	4	2	3	1
	O (16)	15			1	
Nninong	Y (13)	9	1	2		1
Elung	Y (16)	7	4	5		
	O (12)	12				
	(100)	59	11	13	11	6

B = Bakossi, P = Pidgin, E = English, F = French

B/E/P always includes Bakossi and English (13/13) and sometimes also Pidgin (8/13).

B/E/P/F always includes Bakossi and French (11/11), sometimes Bakossi, Pidgin, French (10/11) and sometimes Bakossi, French, English (9/11).

P/E refers to Pidgin and/or English.

Older: In the older age group 51/55 (93%) speak only Bakossi with their Bakossi friends. Out of sixty subjects, thirty-two (53%) use Bakossi to some extent. Five out of 60 (8%) do not use Bakossi.

Younger: In the younger age group 23/60 (38%) speak only Bakossi with Bakossi friends. Out of sixty subjects, thirty-two (53%) use Bakossi to some extent. Five out of sixty (8%) do not use Bakossi.

There is a greater use of Pidgin, English and/or French among the younger group.

The SIL course participants reported that in some interactions among young people, Pidgin was used alongside Bakossi.

Q 2.5 What language(s) do you speak most often with your children? What do they speak with you?

Only 3/75 (4%) reported any usage of French, Pidgin, and/or English. All three also used Bakossi.

Q 2.7 What language(s) do your children speak most often when they play with other children?

	B	B/P	B/P/E	P	P/E
Lower Bakossi	(23)	19	3	1	
Upper Bakossi	(27)	23	3	1	
Elung/Nhia	(28)	18	8	2	
Nninong	(27)	24	1	2	
Total	105	84		3	1

Out of 105 subjects, eighty-four (80%) reported that children use only Bakossi, fifteen (14%) stated that children use Bakossi and Pidgin, and 2 (2%) claimed that Bakossi, Pidgin and English are used. Four (4%) said that children use no Bakossi but Pidgin or Pidgin and English.

Q 3.6 Do you think that young people in your village speak another language more than they speak (name of local language)? which language(s)?

	NO	=	Yes
Lower Bakossi (27)	21	3	3
Upper Bakossi (28)	27	3	
Nninong (29)	29		
Elung (28)	28		
Total	105	4	3

Most of the subjects (105/112, 94%) stated that young people speak no other language more than Bakossi. Four (4%) reported that Pidgin and/or English was spoken as much as Bakossi, while 3 (3%) said that Pidgin and/or English were used more than Bakossi.

Q 2.5 Do you have nay friends who do not speak your language? What language do you speak most often with them? What language(s) do they speak to you?

Out of forty women, more reported using Pidgin (19) than English (6).

The number of men who reported English and Pidgin usage was basically equal (47 and 46, respectively).

Among the males in Nninong more reported using English and Pidgin.

All seven who reported using Douala were older males.

Summary:

The high usage of Bakossi in the home, in general, and among children and young people, in particular, indicates that the Bakossi community is in a language maintenance situation.

3.3 INTELLIGIBILITY

Interviews using questionnaire II were done in all four dialect areas with middle-aged or older men. The following chart shows the degree of understanding reported between the four varieties of Bakossi as well as the understanding reported with the neighboring languages of Mbo, Bassossi, Upper Balong, and Bafaw.

Speakers of:	Listening to speakers of:				
	LB	UB	N	E	Mbo Bassossi U. Balong Bafaw
LB	++	++	++	+	-
UB	++	++	++	--	--
Nn	++	++	+	-	-
EI/Nh	++	++	++	-	+

++ = very well + = well - = not very well -- = not at all

LB = Lower Bakossi UB = Upper Bakossi Nn = Nninong EI/Nh = Elung/Nhia

Concerning the four dialect areas, all stated that people from their variety understood the other three varieties “very well” with the exception of Nninong with Elung/Nhia. Even though Nninong speakers reported some problems in understanding Elung/Nhia speakers, they still claimed to understand them “well.” Some said that there are pronunciation and lexical differences between the varieties. However, when asked specifically about children, people claimed that young children do not understand the other varieties well.

The answers to questionnaire II support what many people told us while we were doing the survey; that is, that all Bakossi understand one another. Some even seemed to be frustrated when we asked about comprehension between dialects and insisted that “all Bakossi are one,” and that they have no problems understanding one another.

When asked about comprehension of the neighboring languages, most reported low or no comprehension.

Q 2.8 When you are in your village and speak with someone from villages in the different dialect areas, what language do you speak? what language do people use to respond to you?

The following chart shows the number of people in each dialect area who said that they speak their own dialect when speaking to someone from a different dialect, and that their interlocutor responds in his/her own dialect.

Speakers of:	Speaking to people of:			
	Lower Bak	Upper Bak	Nninong	Elung/Nhia
Lower Bak		15/22 68%	7/11 64%	2/6 33%
Upper Bak	27/27 100%			23/26 88%
Nninong	27/29 93%	22/27 81%	24/26 92%	19/21 90%
Elung/Nhia	19/23 83%	20/26 77%		
Total	73/79 92%	57/75 76%	54/63 86%	44/53 83%

Combined total 228/270 84%

Use of English and Pidgin reported in the four areas with interlocutors from the other areas;

	Lower Bak	Upper Bak	Nninong	Elung/Nhia
English	1/79	1/75	0.63	2/53
Pidgin	0/79	4/75	2/63	4/53

The first chart show that a high percentage (228/270, 84%) of people use their own variety of Bakossi in speaking to people from a different dialect area, and then receive responses in their interlocutor's dialect. This implies high levels of intelligibility between the Bakossi speech varieties.

Lower Bakossi speakers interacting with speakers of other varieties have the lowest percentage of using their own variety and receiving the interlocutor's variety, although we should note that in one cell there were only six total responses, and in another only eleven.

Out of all the responses recorded (270) there were only ten of Pidgin usage. Eight of these were in the Lower Bakossi group, with seven among the younger age group. (Note that there is not just one possible "response" per person, but each person interviewed could have three or four responses, categorized by which speech variety he/she used in each of the dialect areas.)

Q 2.9 Do you ever speak more slowly so that someone from another village can understand you?

The following chart shows the number and percentage of "yes" responses by area.

Elung/Nhia	Lower Bakossi	Upper Bakossi	Nninong
24/28 (86%)	16/25 (64%)	23/28 (82%)	17/29 (59%)

The subjects were also asked to name a village or villages where they had to speak more slowly. We cannot make any firm conclusions based on their answers since it was an open-ended question, but we did notice that people in the Lower Bakossi area named other Lower Bakossi villages (15/28) while people in other dialect areas listed villages outside of their immediate area. It may be that people of Lower Bakossi do not travel much out of their own areas to the other three dialect areas or that in the Lower Bakossi area they encounter many "strangers" from the other speech varieties with whom they speak more slowly.

Even though 73% of the people asked said that they needed to speak more slowly when they traveled to other villages outside their own dialect area, yet, as we discussed above, in most instances of interdialectal contacts (84%) people did speak their own particular variety of Bakossi.

Q 1.8 Apart from your own village, where have you lived for at least one year of your life? What language did you speak there? Could the people there understand you?

Elung/Nhia	Lower Bakossi	Upper Bakossi	Nninong
24/28 (86%)	16/25 (64%)	23/28 (82%)	17/29 (59%)

Of the thirty-three people who said they had lived in other areas of Bakossi (two reported living in two different areas), all said that they were understood when they spoke their own variety. Out of these thirty-three people, twenty-nine had lived at some time in the Lower Bakossi area. This coincides with what many people told us while we were doing the survey. Many said that people from other dialect areas move to the Lower Bakossi area to do farming. Also, the lower area seems to be more developed in terms of the number of people and schooling possibilities. For example, there are two secondary schools in Tombel Subdivision version one in Bangem Subdivision.

Q 2.6 Do children from this village go to another village for school?

All of the people asked reported that their children attended primary school within their own dialect area.

Q 4.1 do you listen to the Bakossi program on Radio buea? Can you understand everything?

Radio Buea has programming in Bakossi several times a week with two announcers, one from Lower Bakossi and one from Nninong areas. Of the 113 people asked, all but one said that understood everything that was said. the only exception was an Upper Bakossi speaker who had trouble understanding the Nninong announcer.

Summary

The responses to direct questions about comprehension of other varieties of Bakossi show very high levels of receptive competence. Those interviewed using questionnaire II said that Bakossi people from all varieties understand one another “very well” or “well,” even though some said young children do not understand other speech varieties well.

Those who had lived in other areas of Bakossi claimed that they were well understood, even though many reported the need to speak more slowly when speaking with Bakossi people of other villages.

Announcers from Lower Bakossi and Nninong on Radio Buea are well understood.

Responses about the speech variety used in interacting with someone from another dialect area shows indirectly that comprehension is high among these speech varieties.

3.4 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Q 3.3 What would you say if someone offered to teach you to read and write in (x)? (You would not have to speak in (x)). Would you like to learn? Would you be willing to attend a 1-hour class each week to learn? [We replaced “x” with the subject’s own variety as well as other varieties of Bakossi.]

Everyone asked in Lower Bakossi (28), Nninong (29) and Elung (29), AND 27/28 IN Upper Bakossi said they would like to learn to read and write in their own variety of Bakossi and would be willing to attend a class one hour per week to learn. Some added the comment that they would like to see their own language preserved.

Among all groups, 22/113 subjects (19%) said there was no difference among the other three varieties regarding their second choice and that they would learn any of them.

Ten out of 113 (9%) said they only want to learn their own variety.

During a discussion with teachers and students at GSS Nyasoso some advantages mentioned to having Bakossi in a written form were:

- the varieties of Bakossi will come more together
- people can take pride in a language being written down
- the domain of Bakossi music will be opened up
- their own language can be used instead of having to write in Douala

The following chart shows the positive responses of the people from all four areas as to their willingness to learn to read and write the four speech varieties.

	UB	E	N
LB			
Nninong	19/25	2/2	21/26
Elung	19/19	4/6	25/29
Lower Bakossi	7/18	4/6	4/9
Upper Bakossi	2/15	8/23	13/26

It appears that the speaker of Lower Bakossi and Upper Bakossi are less willing to learn to read and write in the other varieties than are those of Ellung and Nninong.

The following chart shows positive responses for subjects from the other three speech varieties when asked about Lower Bakossi. We asked more people about Lower Bakossi partly because written materials already exist in that variety. Since we had more responses about Lower Bakossi we divide them here among Y, MO and FO to see if there were differences in attitude due to age or to gender for the older subjects.

	UB	E	N
Y	3/12	10/13	14/16
FO	0/3	2/4	5/5
MO	10/11	9/9	6/8

Almost all of the older males among the three groups (25/28) said they would be willing to use Lower Bakossi. While a majority of both the older women (7/12) and the younger men and women (27/41) said they would be willing to use Lower Bakossi, the responses were less favorable than among the older males.

Q 3.1 What would you say if the government to teach in (x) in the first years of primary school? Do you think that is a good idea? (Y/N)?

- Almost all those asked said it would be a good idea to have the child's own variety of Bakossi used in the schools as a medium of instruction in the first years of primary school: Elung – 29/29, Nninong – 28/29, Lower Bakossi – 25/27 and Upper Bakossi – 23/23. The three who responded negatively were young males.
- In a group interview held at the Government Secondary School in Nyasoso, a teacher stated that the ability to read and writ Bakossi would enhance other learning.

We asked the subjects if they thought the use of the other varieties (beside their own) as media of instruction in the primary schools was a good idea, although not all were asked about each of the other three varieties. The following chart show the positive responses of speakers of the other three varieties towards the speech form listed.

Asked about:

LB	UB	N	E
43/74 (58%)	50/61 (82%)	9/24 (38%)	4/15 (27%)

The highest percentage of positive responses was for Upper Bakossi to be used in the primary schools. However, we must say that there was sometimes confusion about the term "Upper Bakossi" due to the overlap with Bangem Subdivision. In this instance those from Nninong and Elung/Nhia may have thought that their own varieties were included in "Upper Bakossi". Therefore, we cannot say that the responses show a clear preference for Upper Bakossi.

The 58% positive response toward Lower Bakossi indicates that many people are favorable towards its use in the schools.

Many people commented that it would be easier for the children to learn to read and write if they use their own variety. They stated that the children do not have as high a level of comprehension of the other varieties as do the adults, so did not want a different variety used in the schools. This was also confirmed by the responses the SIL course participants gathered. Others were positive about using a different variety if it was known that the children understood it.

Q 3.2 Would you like your children to learn to read and write (their own variety) in addition to English?

Of the ninety-three subjects asked, all responded positively. Some were not asked this question because they were unmarried or because they had no children.

Q If an outsider wants to learn your language, where is the best place to learn it?

We asked this question to see if any one area would stand out as having a prestigious variety. Out of 113 people asked, 92 said that their own village or area was the best place to learn Bakossi. This demonstrates that there is not one area with a variety which is clearly seen as more prestigious by the Bakossi community. The other responses included: anywhere, Lower Bakossi, and Upper Bakossi.

We also asked some people whether or not they were favorable toward having the Scriptures in Bakossi, and all fifty-six who were asked gave positive responses.

Summary

- In general, everyone asked was very positive toward learning to read and write in their variety of Bakossi, for themselves as well as for their children.
- The speakers of Upper and Lower Bakossi seemed less willing to learn other varieties than the speakers of Elung/Nhia or Nninong. Based on the above discussion about the responses to question 3.1, a considerable number of people showed a favorable attitude towards developing Lower Bakossi.
- No one particular language area has been noted as more prestigious.

3.5 WRITTEN MATERIALS

Q 4.2 Have you ever seen anything written in Bakossi? (If yes) What have you seen?

Half of the subjects asked (66/112) reported that they had seen something written in Bakossi. Some of the responses recorded were: a booklet, a novel, song books, tracts, and isolated words. Among the various groups, older women had the least exposure to written materials (2/18) and the speakers of Lower Bakossi showed the most exposure (22/28). Some also reported having written Bakossi when composing songs and corresponding with friends.

4 CONCLUSION

The main research questions that we are addressing in this survey report are:

- Should the Bakossi language be developed?
- If so, which speech variety should be used for the reference dialect?

4.1 DEVELOPMENT

We will first summarize the results as they relate to the question of whether or not the Bakossi language should be developed. The related issues include level of multilingualism, language vitality and attitudes.

4.2 LEVEL OF MULTILINGUALISM

There appears to be quite a high level of bilingualism in both English and Pidgin in the Bakossi speech community. For English this applies especially to young males and older more influential males, and to about half of

the younger females and less influential males. For Pidgin the majority of males and females at both age levels claim to have high or average proficiency. As discussed above, these results should be interpreted carefully given that they are based on self-reported data, that there were potential problems with people understanding some items and that some items in the test were inappropriate. However, some members in the bilingual community are bilingual enough in English and/or Pidgin to use written materials in those languages. While this is not the case for the whole community, this trend should be carefully observed in the future, especially if more people obtain a secondary education.

4.3 LANGUAGE VITALITY

The results show that Bakossi is not in a language shift but a maintenance situation:

- Bakossi is almost always used in the home, between spouses, and with children. Almost every one reported Bakossi as L1.
- Pidgin and/or English is sometimes used among friends and by children at play, but Bakossi is used in these domains to a much higher degree.

Even though many reported a high or average proficiency in English and/or Pidgin, it does not seem that this factor is leading to language shift at this point. It seems rather to be a diglossic or polyglossic situation in which English and Pidgin are the “high” languages (i.e., those used in more formal domains) and Bakossi is the “low” language (i.e., the one used in more informal domains).

4.4 ATTITUDES

Almost everyone asked was positive toward learning to read and write Bakossi and wanted their children to learn to read and write it as well.

4.5 IMPLICATIONS

Given that Bakossi is in a language maintenance and not a language shift situation, and that there are positive attitudes toward development and use of written materials, Bakossi should be recommended for development, as it was in *ALCAM* (1983:162). There are currently some people in the community who could use written materials in English and/or Pidgin, but not all would be able to do so. As mentioned previously, the level of English and/or Pidgin bilingualism should be monitored in the future to see if more social groups (e.g., older women) in the speech community will be able to later use written materials in those languages.

4.6 REFERENCE DIALECT

Given that Bakossi will be developed, which variety should be used as the reference dialect? Intelligibility among varieties, attitudes toward varieties, and availability of written materials are among the relevant factors.

4.7 INTELLIGIBILITY

Those interviewed reported both directly and indirectly that the speakers of the various Bakossi dialects have high receptive competence of the other dialects.

4.8 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

While almost everyone was favorable toward learning to read and write in their own variety, most were also positive about learning in another variety. It appears, however, that the speakers of Lower Bakossi and Upper Bakossi are less willing to learn in other varieties compared to those from Nninong and Elung/Nhia. There was no one variety that was clearly the most prestigious.

4.9 RELATED FACTORS

- Existence of materials: Linguistic descriptions have been made of the Lower Bakossi speech form and some written materials have been produced.

- Migration within the Bakossi area: Ejedepang-Koge (1986) reports a population shift to the Lower from the Upper Bakossi area due to the economic situation since it is possible to have year-round cash earnings in that area. Reports from subjects confirmed this.
- Language exposure: Some people from the Bangem Subdivision spend part of the year farming in the Tombel Subdivision. This means that they have language exposure to Lower Bakossi, and the lower Bakossi speakers have exposure to their varieties.
- Lower Bakossi: Some of those we interviewed told us that the speech variety in the Lower Bakossi area is more homogeneous than that in the Upper Bakossi area. For example, the chief of Muambong I said that if one were to go from village to village in Upper Bakossi, different terms would be used for items which would have the same name in Lower Bakossi.

Based on these factors, we recommend that an attempt be made to use Lower as the reference dialect. Attitudes do not appear to be negative towards it; it is an area of much economic activity; many people have exposure to the speech variety; and materials already exist in Lower Bakossi. If Lower Bakossi is indeed used as the reference dialect, transitional materials for children and possibly adults may be necessary for bridging into standard from the other varieties. Continuing evaluation should be done in monitoring the various factors to see there are any major changes in the future.

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