



## Code-Meshing as Resistance: Digital Pragmatics, Implicature, and Stance-Taking in Buea Youth Discourse During Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis

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### Abstract

**Objective:** This study investigates pragmatic strategies in social media discourse among Buea youth during Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis (2016–2026), examining how code-meshing, implicature, and stance-taking function as resources for constructing resistance identities in digitally mediated political communication.

**Background:** Whilst structural studies have documented the grammatical features of Cameroon English, the pragmatic dimensions of digital resistance discourse in Anglophone Cameroon have received comparatively little scholarly attention. The Anglophone Crisis, which began with peaceful protests in 2016, transformed social media platforms into critical sites of political communication for the youths, observed to navigate complex multilingual repertoires that include Cameroon Pidgin English, Cameroon English, and French.

**Methodology:** A corpus of 2,500 posts (approximately 185,000 words) was drawn from WhatsApp groups ( $n = 1,800$ ) and X, formerly Twitter ( $n = 700$ ), and analysed using a mixed-methods approach. Implicature coding applied Gricean maxim-violation criteria; stance annotation employed Du Bois's triangulated framework [7]; and code-meshing analysis examined language alternation patterns for pragmatic function. Inter-rater reliability for implicature coding yielded Cohen's kappa = 0.87, indicating strong agreement.

**Results:** Seventy-three per cent of protest mobilisation calls employed implicature rather than explicit directives, with irony (42%), metaphor (31%), hyperbole (18%), and understatement (9%) as the dominant types. Positive alignment stance appeared in 68% of coded instances, indexing in-group solidarity. Code-meshing followed four principal patterns: Pidgin-to-English (41%), English-to-Pidgin (29%), French-to-Pidgin (18%), and triadic meshing (12%), each serving distinctive audience design and identity-indexing functions. Implicature usage intensified by approximately 15 percentage points during periods of heightened government surveillance.

**Conclusion:** Code-meshing functions as purposeful audience design across local and global communicative scales. The findings position pragmatic competence as a form of resistance capital and advocate for additive digital literacies that validate local pragmatic norms within educational contexts in Anglophone Cameroon.

**Keywords:** Code-Meshing, Digital Pragmatics, Implicature, Stance-Taking, Anglophone Crisis, Buea, Translingual Practice

### Introduction

Buea, Southwest Cameroon's university town, embodies Anglophone linguistic identity amid a sociopolitical crisis beginning in 2016. While structural linguistic studies document Cameroon English grammatical features [1], [4], pragmatic functions in digital resistance discourse have received comparatively little scholarly attention. Social media platforms serve as primary sites where young people strategically deploy implicature for veiled protest calls and employ stance-taking to signal alignment against perceived Francophone dominance through translingual practices [5].

This Buea-centred investigation addresses this gap by analysing how pragmatic strategies construct social meanings during crisis escalation, including lockdowns, ghost town operations, and 2025 separatist referenda. Three research questions guide the study: (1) What implicature types characterise crisis discourse among Buea residents? (2) How does stance-taking index resistance and solidarity? (3) What pragmatic functions does code-meshing serve in digital communications?

The Anglophone Crisis represents complex sociopolitical tensions rooted in historical marginalisation of English-speaking regions within predominantly Francophone national structures. Beginning with peaceful protests by lawyers and teachers in late 2016,

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confrontations escalated between separatist groups and government forces, transforming daily life in Anglophone regions. Buea, as regional capital and home to the University of Buea, experienced particularly severe impacts: prolonged campus closures, regular lockdowns (locally termed "ghost towns, especially on Mondays"), security operations, and economic disruptions.

Digital communication platforms became critical for information dissemination, mobilisation, and identity expression. Buea youth, predominantly university students or recent graduates, navigate complex linguistic repertoires including Cameroon Pidgin English, various Cameroon English registers, French, and indigenous languages. Their social media discourse reveals sophisticated pragmatic competencies enabling them to communicate resistance while managing surveillance risks.

This research contributes scholarly conversations by extending digital pragmatics research as it examines implicature and stance in multilingual crisis contexts marked by political instability and linguistic marginalisation. It also advances understanding of code-meshing beyond mere linguistic alternation, revealing its role in negotiating multiple audiences and interaction scales. Lastly, it provides empirical evidence of digital literacies developing in response to sociopolitical pressures, and offers insights for educators, policymakers, and language scholars in linguistically diverse, politically contested contexts.

## 2. Literature Review

This section explores digital pragmatics in crisis contexts and Cameroon multilingualism within the Anglophone Crisis. It also presents the theoretical frameworks that buttress the study.

### 2.1 Digital Pragmatics in Crisis Contexts

Digital pragmatics examines meaning-making in computer-mediated communication, particularly how participants deploy implicature, speech acts, and interactional strategies in online settings [9]. Traditional pragmatic theories require adaptation for digital contexts characterised by asynchronous communication, absent embodied cues, and multimodal possibilities.

Political crisis communication research reveals distinctive pragmatic patterns. Indirectness emerges as prevalent strategy for mitigating dissent expression risks in surveilled environments. Figurative language, including irony and metaphor, enables speakers to communicate meanings while maintaining plausible deniability [12]. This indirectness functions not merely as obfuscation but as pragmatic resource signalling in-group membership while excluding outsiders from full comprehension.

Stance-taking is another key phenomenon in digital crisis discourse. Du Bois [7] conceptualises stance as a triangulated relationship wherein speakers

simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects, and align with or distance from other interlocutors. In political contexts, stance-taking enables collective identity construction and solidarity or opposition expression. Digital platforms amplify stance visibility through affordances like liking, sharing, and hashtagging, rendering individual stances visible to broader audiences and helping these positions accumulate into recognisable political orientations.

African digital studies document multilingual speakers employing code-meshing strategically. [6] demonstrates Mongolian youth using translanguaging practices to negotiate local authenticity and global cosmopolitanism. African social media research reveals code alternation as audience design, wherein speakers adjust linguistic choices to address multiple audiences simultaneously [11]. However, limited research examines these practices in Anglophone Cameroon or active political conflict contexts.

### 2.2 Cameroon Multilingualism and the Anglophone Crisis

Cameroon's linguistic ecology includes approximately 280 indigenous languages alongside French and English as official languages [10]. Colonial history under British and French administration established separate Anglophone and Francophone regions, united following 1961 independence. However, Anglophone regions experienced progressive marginalisation within Francophone-dominated national institutions, education, and governance.

Anglophone linguistic identity centres on Cameroon English, documented in structural research [1], [4]. Cameroon English exhibits distinctive phonological, lexical, and grammatical features while maintaining English language continuum intelligibility. Equally significant is Cameroon Pidgin English, functioning as lingua franca across ethnic groups and indexing regional identity and solidarity [3]. Pidgin holds particular cultural salience among young people, symbolizing authenticity, elite norm resistance, and grassroots community connection.

The 2016 Anglophone Crisis intensified linguistic dimensions of political identity. Early protests centred explicitly on language rights, objecting to Francophone judge and teacher appointments in Anglophone courts and schools. As crisis evolved into armed conflict, linguistic choices became increasingly politicised allegiance markers. Separatist movements adopt Pidgin English and Cameroon English in communications, while government discourse employs French-dominant registers. This linguistic polarisation creates pragmatic challenges for individuals navigating multiple communities and identities.

Atanga [2] examines gender and language politics during the crisis, revealing how women deploy linguistic strategies to negotiate authority within patriarchal movement structures. However, youth digital discourse

specifically remains underexamined. Young Buea residents occupy distinctive positions, often possessing higher education credentials granting access to standard English registers while maintaining connection to Pidgin-speaking communities. Their digital communications reveal sophisticated navigation of multiple linguistic resources for pragmatic purposes.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

This research integrates three theoretical perspectives analysing pragmatic strategies in Buea crisis discourse. Implicature theory, originating with Grice [8], explains how speakers communicate meanings beyond literal utterance content through principled conversational maxim violations governing quantity, quality, relation, and manner. In crisis contexts, maxim violations enable speakers to implicate resistance meanings while maintaining literal innocence, managing dissent risks. Du Bois’s stance framework [7] provides analytical tools for examining how speakers position themselves and others through evaluative utterances. Stance comprises three simultaneous acts: object evaluation, subject positioning, and speaker alignment. This triangulated conception reveals how individual utterances contribute to collective identity formation and political mobilisation. Applied to digital discourse, stance analysis illuminates how participants construct solidarity through accumulated alignments made visible across multiple posts and interactions.

Translingual practice theory [5] frames code-meshing not as interference or deficit but as strategic linguistic resource deployment achieving communicative goals. Translingual speakers draw on full repertoires, crossing named language boundaries responding to rhetorical situations. This perspective proves particularly apt for Cameroon contexts, where multilingualism constitutes the norm and rigid language boundaries reflect colonial impositions rather than communicative realities. Code-meshing enables speakers to negotiate multiple scales, addressing local audiences through Pidgin while accessing global attention through English, sometimes incorporating French for specific pragmatic effects.

**Table 1:** Theoretical Concepts in Crisis Discourse

| Concept      | Function in Crisis Discourse                    | Example   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Implicature  | Enables veiled protest expression               | "Ghost town loading" (implicates imminent shutdown)               |
| Stance       | Constructs solidarity and resistance identities | "Plus one for Amba" (signals alignment)                           |
| Code-meshing | Negotiates multiple audience scales             | "Les ambazoniens go siddon" (French mockery to Pidgin solidarity) |

These theoretical perspectives enable comprehensive analysis of how Buea youth employ pragmatic strategies

to construct resistance identities, mobilise collective action, and navigate risks within digital spaces during the Anglophone Crisis.

### 3. Methodology

This section describes the design of the study, the participants and setting, and the instruments and procedures used to collect and analyse data.

#### 3.1 Research Context and Participants

Buea functions as Southwest Cameroon's regional capital and hosts the University of Buea, the premier Anglophone university. Since 2016, the city experienced intense crisis impacts: prolonged campus closures spanning 2017-2018 regular lockdowns enforced through ghost town operations with Monday shut downs of the campus, security force deployments, and civilian violence incidents. These conditions fundamentally transformed social, economic, and educational life, with young people bearing disproportionate impacts through disrupted education and limited economic opportunities.

Research participants comprised 200 youth aged 18–30 years, with 60% identifying as current or former university students. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling initiated with contacts in established WhatsApp groups focused on crisis-related information sharing and coordination. All participants provided informed consent for anonymised contribution inclusion in research analysis. Demographic diversity included representation across Southwest and Northwest region indigenous ethnic groups, varied socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational attainment ranging from secondary school to postgraduate study.

Data collection occurred during 2025, a period of intensified crisis activity coinciding with separatist movement referendum efforts and government security operations suppressing such initiatives, and Presidential election. This temporal frame captured discourse during heightened political mobilisation, providing rich data on pragmatic strategies employed under crisis conditions.

#### 3.2 Corpus Construction

The research corpus comprises 2,500 social media posts totalling approximately 185,000 words, drawn from two primary platforms that represent different communicative contexts and affordances. WhatsApp groups provided 1,800 posts characterised by relatively private communication among known participants, enabling observation of pragmatic strategies where surveillance concerns mixed with in-group trust. X (formerly Twitter) contributed 700 posts from public accounts using crisis-related hashtags, revealing pragmatic strategies oriented toward broader, more public audiences including international observers and media.

Data collection followed rigorous ethical protocols with data collection focused exclusively on public posts from accounts using crisis-related hashtags, collected through the platform's application programming interface using Twarc software. All data underwent anonymisation procedures removing identifying information including usernames, profile details, and specific individual references.

Inclusion criteria specified that posts must demonstrate crisis theme relevance, including protest mobilisation, ghost town operations, political commentary, or identity expression related to Anglophone grievances. Exclusion criteria eliminated spam content, commercial advertising, and off-topic discussions unrelated to crisis contexts. The resulting corpus reflects authentic crisis discourse while maintaining manageable scope for intensive pragmatic analysis.

Linguistic composition reveals the multilingual character typical of Buea youth communication. WhatsApp posts employed Cameroon Pidgin English in 52% of content, Cameroon English in 38%, and French in 10%, with substantial code-meshing across categories. X posts showed different distribution: Cameroon English at 61%, Pidgin at 29%, and French at 10%. These platform differences likely reflect audience design considerations, with X users orienting toward global English-speaking audiences while WhatsApp group members prioritise local authenticity signalled through Pidgin usage.

**Table 2:** Corpus Composition by Platform

| Platform | Posts | Tokens  | Languages                           |
|----------|-------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| WhatsApp | 1,800 | 132,000 | Pidgin 52%, English 38%, French 10% |
| X        | 700   | 53,000  | English 61%, Pidgin 29%, French 10% |
| Total    | 2,500 | 185,000 | Combined multilingual               |

### 3.3 Analytical Procedures

Analysis proceeded through multiple stages employing qualitative and quantitative methods addressing the three research questions. Initial familiarization involved repeated complete corpus reading to identify emergent patterns and develop preliminary coding categories. Subsequent systematic coding employed NVivo 14 qualitative analysis software to manage and organise data while enabling both inductive and deductive analytical approaches.

Implicature coding focused on identifying instances where speakers violated Gricean conversational maxims to communicate implied meanings. A 500-post subset exhibiting potential implicature underwent intensive analysis classifying implicature types including irony, metaphor, hyperbole, understatement, and indirect speech acts. Two independent coders completed this process, with inter-rater reliability calculated using Cohen's kappa coefficient, yielding 0.87 indicating strong

agreement. Disagreements underwent resolution through discussion and third analyst consultation.

Stance annotation employed Du Bois's [7] triangulated framework, identifying how speakers simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects, and align with or distance from other participants. An 800-post sample underwent detailed stance coding, identifying stance objects (typically government actions, separatist movements, or community members), stance subjects (individuals or collective identities positioned through discourse), and alignment patterns (whether speakers aligned positively or negatively with referenced positions). This coding revealed both explicit stance markers including evaluative adjectives and modal expressions, and implicit stance conveyed through quotation, reported speech, and other interactional devices.

Code-meshing analysis examined language alternation patterns within and across posts, attending to pragmatic functions served by switching between Pidgin, English, and French. Analysis considered both intra-sentential code-switching occurring within single utterances and inter-sentential switching between utterances. Particular attention focused on identifying how speakers employed code choices for audience design, indexing different identities, and achieving specific rhetorical effects such as mockery, solidarity expression, or authority invocation.

Quantitative analysis complemented qualitative interpretation through frequency counts and statistical testing. Log-likelihood tests examined whether distributions of implicature types, stance patterns, and code-meshing strategies differed significantly across platforms (WhatsApp versus X) and across time periods within the data collection year. These tests helped identify systematic patterns while acknowledging that statistical significance in discourse analysis requires qualitative interpretation regarding meaningfulness and practical significance.

Throughout analysis, attention focused on original interpretation and synthesis. While engaging with existing theoretical frameworks and empirical findings from prior research, analytical insights emerged through systematic engagement with the unique Buea corpus. All examples presented in findings represent authentic data instances selected to illustrate broader patterns while protecting participant anonymity through pseudonymisation.

## 4. Findings

This section presents the results of the corpus analysis organised around the three research questions. It reports on implicature types identified in crisis-related social media posts, stance-taking patterns and their solidarity-building functions, and the pragmatic distribution of code-meshing across language pairs and platforms. Quantitative frequencies are presented alongside qualitative illustration drawn from authenticated corpus examples.

### 4.1 Implicature Types

The analysis shows that 73% of posts calling for protest participation or ghost town observance employed implicature rather than explicit directives, demonstrating systematic indirectness use to mitigate risks associated with open resistance mobilisation. Four principal implicature types emerged: irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and understatement. Each type serves distinctive pragmatic functions while sharing the general property of enabling speakers to communicate resistance meanings while maintaining potential deniability.

Irony was the most frequent implicature type at 42% of coded instances. Ironic utterances typically violated Grice's maxim of quality by stating propositions speakers manifestly did not believe, thereby implicating opposite meanings. A characteristic example appeared in a WhatsApp group post: **"Buea dey sweet for lockdown today, everybody go enjoy house arrest."** The literal claim that lockdown conditions are enjoyable contradicts shared knowledge of hardships imposed by ghost town operations, thereby implicating that participants should observe the shutdown precisely because conditions are not enjoyable but politically necessary. This ironic framing enables the poster to mobilise participation while avoiding explicit instructions that could constitute evidence of illegal protest organisation.

Metaphor represented 31% of implicature instances, functioning to indirectly reference crisis events through figurative language. The recurring phrase **"ghost town loading"** exemplifies metaphorical implicature, comparing imminent shutdowns to computer loading

processes. This metaphor achieves multiple pragmatic effects: it signals advance warning to prepare for closures, frames shutdowns as inevitable and mechanistically determined rather than individually chosen, and employs technical language connoting sophistication and modernity. Another prevalent metaphor described security forces as **"boys in black,"** indexing their presence without explicit naming that might trigger keyword-based surveillance.

Hyperbole accounted for 18% of implicature, employing exaggeration to evaluate situations and mobilise emotional responses. Posts stating **"Army go drink garri for Monday"** (soldiers will eat only cheap food on Monday) hyperbolically predict separatist military victories, using exaggeration to boost morale and signal confidence in resistance success. Similarly, descriptions of total participation such as **"All Buea go siddon Monday, even dogs no go comot"** (all Buea will stay home Monday, even dogs will not emerge) overstate anticipated compliance to create normative pressure for universal observance.

Understatement, while less frequent at 9%, achieved powerful pragmatic effects through minimisation. Posts describing serious violence or repression incidents through understated language implicated severity through contrast between events and linguistic framing. For instance, referring to military raids as **"small disturbances"** or killings as **"unfortunate incidents"** violated the quantity maxim by providing insufficient information given event gravity, thereby implicating criticism through marked understatement.

**Table 3A:** Distribution of Implicature Types in Crisis Discourse

| Implicature Type | Percentage  | Frequency (n=500) | Example                       | Pragmatic Function  |
|------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Irony            | 42%         | 210               | "Buea dey sweet for lockdown" | Signals shutdown call through ironic enjoyment claim; maintains deniability |
| Metaphor         | 31%         | 155               | "Ghost town loading"          | Signals approaching ghost town; frames as inevitable process                |
| Hyperbole        | 18%         | 90                | "Army go drink garri"         | Predicts defeat through exaggerated privation; boosts morale                |
| Understatement   | 9%          | 45                | "Small palava for town"       | Signals serious incident through minimisation; implies criticism            |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>100%</b> | <b>500</b>        | —                             | —   |

Platform differences emerged in implicature usage patterns. WhatsApp posts employed implicature in 79% of mobilisation messages, significantly higher than X posts' 61% rate ( $\chi^2 = 23.4, p < 0.001$ ). This difference likely reflects WhatsApp group communication's relatively private character, where participants knew fellow members and could rely on shared interpretive frameworks to decode implicatures. X posts, addressing broader and more heterogeneous audiences, more frequently employed explicit language alongside implicature to ensure message comprehension across varied audiences.

Temporal analysis revealed implicature usage intensification during periods of heightened government

surveillance and security operations. During months when activist arrests received prominent coverage, implicature rates increased by approximately 15 percentage points relative to baseline periods, suggesting speakers adjust indirectness levels in response to perceived surveillance risks. This pattern supports theoretical predictions that implicature functions strategically to manage communicative risks in repressive environments.

### 4.2 Stance-Taking Patterns

Stance analysis identified three main patterns: positive alignment expressing solidarity with resistance movements or fellow community members, negative

alignment distancing from government forces or Francophone dominance, and epistemic stance expressing uncertainty or speculation regarding crisis developments. Positive alignment constituted 68% of coded stance instances, negative alignment 22%, and epistemic stance 10%.

Positive alignment stance typically employed explicit markers including **"plus one"** borrowed from social media liking conventions, agreeing response tokens such as "correct" or "true talk," and shared identity expressions including **"we Buea people"** or **"we Anglophone."** An X post illustrates characteristic positive alignment: **"University of Buea students plus one for total shutdown. Les ambazoniens unite."** This utterance evaluates the stance object (total shutdown) positively, positions the stance subject (University of Buea students) as aligned with this evaluation, and explicitly calls for alignment among **"ambazoniens"** (Ambazonia movement supporters). The plus one marker, originating in digital environments, enables efficient agreement expression while indexing digital literacy and contemporary youth identity.

Positive alignment frequently occurred in cascading sequences where multiple speakers successively expressed agreement, creating visible alignment accumulation. These sequences construct collective identity and demonstrate solidarity, rendering individual positions into recognisable group orientations. In WhatsApp groups, extended plus one response sequences to mobilisation calls created strong normative pressure for participation through demonstrated consensus.

Negative alignment employed contrastive markers including **"minus one,"** direct criticism, and mockery to distance speakers from evaluated objects. Government officials received negative alignment through derogatory nicknames and critical commentary. Francophone Cameroonians were sometimes positioned through negative stance as **"selffists"** (a localised term meaning selfish people), though such ethnic targeting appeared less frequently than stance directed toward government institutions and policies. Example negative alignment appeared in posts stating **"Minus one for Biya regime, dem no fit stop we"** (minus one for Biya regime, they cannot stop us), explicitly rejecting government authority while asserting resistance continuation.

Epistemic stance expressed uncertainty, speculation, or evidential marking regarding crisis-related information. Given rumor proliferation and unreliable information during crisis conditions, speakers frequently employed epistemic hedging to qualify claims while still circulating potentially important news. Posts included markers such as **"I hear say"** (I heard that), **"e fit be say"** (it might be that), or **"maybe"** to indicate evidential limitations. Such epistemic stance enabled information sharing while acknowledging uncertainty, managing false information spreading risks while ensuring potentially important warnings received attention.

**Table 4:** Stance Function Patterns

| Stance Type        | Frequency | Function                 | Example                      |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Positive Alignment | 544 (68%) | Express solidarity       | "Me plus one for ghost town" |
| Negative Alignment | 176 (22%) | Distance from opposition | "Minus one for Biya regime"  |
| Epistemic          | 80 (10%)  | Mark uncertainty         | "Ghost town fit happen?"     |

Stance triangulation analysis revealed how individual utterances construct complex intersubjective alignments. The earlier example analysed through Du Bois's framework [7] shows: the stance subject comprises University of Buea students positioned as collective actor, the stance object encompasses the shutdown receiving positive evaluation through plus one marking, and the explicit alignment call unites ambazoniens as co-participants sharing this evaluative orientation. This single utterance thus accomplishes identity work positioning the speaker as University of Buea student and ambazonian, evaluation work endorsing shutdown tactics, and intersubjective work recruiting others into shared alignment.

Stance patterns differed significantly across platforms. X posts employed explicit stance markers at higher rates than WhatsApp posts ( $\chi^2 = 18.7, p < 0.001$ ), likely reflecting need to clearly signal positions to diverse audiences unfamiliar with posters' backgrounds and orientations. WhatsApp group communication, occurring among known participants with established relationships, more frequently relied on implicit stance conveyed through presupposition and intertextual reference.

Gender patterns in stance-taking merit attention. Female-authored posts, identified through profile information and group member knowledge, employed positive alignment at slightly higher rates (72%) than male-authored posts (66%), while negative alignment appeared more frequently in male-authored content (25% compared to 17%). These differences, while not dramatic, suggest gendered patterns in resistance discourse warranting further investigation in future research.

### 4.3 Code-Meshing Functions

Code-meshing analysis shows systematic pragmatic functions served by alternation among Pidgin, English, and French within crisis discourse. Rather than random switching or linguistic interference, code-meshing emerges as strategic multilingual resource deployment to achieve communicative goals including audience design, identity indexing, and rhetorical effect production. Four principal code-meshing patterns were identified: Pidgin to English transitions, English to Pidgin transitions, French to Pidgin transitions, and triadic meshing incorporating all three codes within single utterances.

Pidgin to English transitions constituted 41% of identified code-meshing instances, typically functioning to broaden audience accessibility from local to global scales.

Posts might begin with Pidgin to establish local authenticity and solidarity, then transition to English when addressing international observers or making claims intended for documentation and media attention. Example: **"Wuna don see how dem dey do we.** This systematic oppression must be documented for the international community." The initial Pidgin phrase (you all have seen how they treat us) establishes speaker positioning within the local community, while the English continuation enables comprehension among global human rights monitors and journalists. This pattern reflects strategic audience design acknowledging that resistance success requires both local mobilisation and international legitimacy.

English to Pidgin transitions accounted for 29% of code-meshing, generally functioning inversely to move from authoritative or formal registers toward solidarity and intimacy. Posts might employ standard English when making factual claims or referencing official documents, then switch to Pidgin for affective commentary or mobilisation calls. This pattern indexes different participation frameworks and social relationships, using English for information transmission while Pidgin signals shared identity and emotional connection.

French to Pidgin transitions represented 18% of meshing instances, serving distinctive functions related to mockery and resistance against Francophone dominance. French elements typically appeared as quotations or reported speech attributed to government officials or Francophone Cameroonians, followed by Pidgin commentary that mocked or rejected the quoted content. Example: **"Les soldats go chop beating Monday. Ghost Town Buea wuna ready?"** (The soldiers will receive beating Monday. Ghost Town Buea you all ready?). The French phrase "les soldats" (the soldiers) indexes Francophone military forces before Pidgin predicts their defeat, creating ironic juxtaposition that mocks government authority while mobilizing local participation. Triadic code-meshing incorporating all three languages within single utterances occurred in 12% of instances, achieving maximal inclusivity by addressing all linguistic communities simultaneously. Such dense meshing demonstrates high metalinguistic awareness and sophisticated audience design, positioning speakers as cosmopolitan multilingual actors while maintaining connection to local Pidgin-speaking grassroots. Triadic meshing appeared most frequently in posts addressing divisive issues where speakers sought to bridge potential linguistic fractures within the Anglophone community.

**Table 5:** Code-Meshing Pattern Distribution

| Pattern           | Percentage | Pragmatic Function                               |
|-------------------|------------|--|
| Pidgin to English | 41%        | Transition from local to global audience scales  |
| English to Pidgin | 29%        | Movement from authority to solidarity registers  |
| French to Pidgin  | 18%        | Mock Francophone authority, express resistance   |
| Triadic           | 12%        | Maximize inclusivity across language communities |

Platform differences in code-meshing patterns proved statistically significant. WhatsApp posts employed Pidgin-dominant meshing at substantially higher rates reflecting the platform's role in local community communication, while X posts showed preference for English-dominant meshing oriented toward international audiences. French incorporation appeared at similar rates across platforms (approximately 10%), suggesting consistent pragmatic functions regardless of primary audience.

Beyond these quantitative patterns, qualitative analysis reveals sophisticated metalinguistic commentary embedded in code-meshing choices. Speakers demonstrated awareness that language selection constitutes political positioning, explicitly discussing strategic uses of Pidgin versus English in mobilisation efforts. Some posts debated whether international advocacy required standard English or whether Pidgin authentically represented Anglophone identity. These metalinguistic discussions evidence high pragmatic awareness wherein language itself becomes object of strategic reflection.

Code-meshing also enabled speakers to navigate complex identity positions. University students, for instance, employed code-meshing to simultaneously index educational credentials through English competence while maintaining grassroots authenticity through Pidgin deployment. This linguistic balancing act reflects broader tensions in Anglophone identity between elite educational aspirations and populist resistance politics. Rather than resolving these tensions, code-meshing enables their simultaneous performance through strategic multilingual deployment.

## 5. Discussion

This section interprets the findings in relation to the three theoretical frameworks: Gricean implicature theory, Du Bois's stance triangle [7], and Canagarajah's translingual practice. It addresses each research question in turn, situating the results within the broader literature on digital pragmatics, African multilingualism, and resistance discourse. The discussion also attends to the Buea-specific educational and demographic context that shapes the pragmatic repertoires documented in the corpus.

### 5.1 Pragmatics as Resistance Capital

The findings show that pragmatic strategies serve as critical resources enabling resistance under conditions of repression and surveillance. Implicature, through enabling veiled protest meaning communication, serves as what might be termed a safety valve allowing speakers to mobilise collective action while managing detection and punishment risks. This finding confirms and extends digital pragmatics theory [9] by demonstrating its operation in politically repressive environments characterised by active surveillance and dissent consequences.

The high implicature frequency in WhatsApp communications (79% of mobilisation messages) relative to X (61%) suggests speakers adjust indirectness strategically in response to surveillance risk perceptions. WhatsApp, despite encryption claims, appears treated as relatively more secure than public X posts, yet participants still heavily employ implicature even in this relatively protected space. This pervasive indirectness indicates deep-seated concerns about surveillance penetration of ostensibly private communications, reflecting realistic assessment of government monitoring capabilities and willingness to prosecute dissent.

Irony emerged as the predominant implicature type, functioning to invert literal meanings through quality maxim violations. Ironic discourse enables speakers to state propositions they manifestly do not believe, relying on shared background knowledge and interpretive competence to convey implied meanings. In crisis contexts, irony serves multiple functions: it permits protest expression while maintaining deniability (the speaker can claim to have meant only literal content), it signals in-group membership through demonstrating shared knowledge required for interpretation, and it provides emotional relief through humorous framing of otherwise threatening situations.

Metaphor prevalence, particularly spatial and computational metaphors like "ghost town loading," reveals creative adaptation of digital age linguistic resources to crisis communication needs. Loading metaphors frame shutdowns as inevitable technological processes, thereby positioning protest participation as natural and mechanistic rather than individually chosen resistance acts. This framing potentially reduces psychological participation barriers by representing involvement as passive compliance with inevitable processes rather than active political commitment requiring courage and conviction.

## 5.2 Stance Triangulation and Collective Identity Construction

Stance analysis illuminates processes through which individual evaluative utterances accumulate into collective political identities. Du Bois's [7] triangulated framework proves analytically productive for revealing how speakers simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects, and align with or distance from other participants in single discursive moves. Applied to crisis discourse, stance triangulation demonstrates how digital communications construct "we Buea youth" or "we ambazonians" as recognisable political subjects through accumulated alignments made visible across multiple posts and interactions.

The predominance of positive alignment stance (68%) relative to negative alignment (22%) suggests that solidarity construction takes precedence over oppositional expression in crisis mobilisation. While negative stance targeting government forces and

Francophone dominance certainly appears, the primary pragmatic work involves building in-group cohesion through positive alignment with shared positions. This finding challenges assumptions that resistance discourse primarily involves opposition to authorities, revealing instead that resistance communities require substantial pragmatic labour directed toward internal solidarity building.

Plus one marking, borrowed from social media interaction conventions, enables efficient agreement expression while indexing digital literacy and contemporary youth identity. Plus one sequence proliferation in WhatsApp groups creates visible aligned stance accumulations, functioning to construct normative participation expectations through demonstrated consensus. These digital affordances transform individual stance-taking into collective identity performance, rendering political positions visible and socially enforced through networked interactions.

Epistemic stance marking reveals pragmatic strategies for managing information uncertainty in crisis conditions characterised by rumor proliferation and unreliable reporting. By explicitly marking evidential limitations through hedging and modal expressions, speakers circulate potentially important warnings while avoiding unverified claim responsibility. This pragmatic epistemic responsibility negotiation enables information sharing necessary for community protection while managing misinformation spreading risks. The epistemic stance pattern thus represents sophisticated communicative adaptation to degraded information environments typical of political crises.

## 5.3 Scale Negotiation Through Code-Meshing

Code-meshing findings demonstrate how Buea youth navigate multiple interaction scales through strategic linguistic choices, simultaneously addressing local Pidgin-speaking communities, national Anglophone populations, and international audiences. This scalar navigation reflects theoretical insights from translanguaging practice [5], which conceptualises multilingual competence not as separate language systems but as integrated repertoires deployed flexibly in response to communicative situations.

Pidgin indexes local authenticity and grassroots connection, functioning to position speakers as embedded community members rather than detached elites. High Pidgin frequency in WhatsApp communications (52%) reflects its role in constructing intimate solidarity among participants who share linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Yet Pidgin usage extends beyond simple solidarity signalling to accomplish complex rhetorical work including mobilisation, mockery, and emotional expression. Pidgin's pragmatic richness in crisis discourse challenges deficit perspectives treating it as simplified or limited relative to standard languages.

English serves multiple pragmatic functions depending on register and context. Standard English provides access to international audiences including human rights organisations, media, and diaspora communities whose support proves crucial for resistance legitimacy and material resources. Academic or formal English registers also index educational credentials and cosmopolitan competence, positioning speakers as authoritative commentators rather than mere participants. However, Cameroon English, with its distinctive phonological and lexical features, simultaneously signals Anglophone regional identity, differentiating speakers from both Francophone Cameroonians and external English speakers. This dual indexicality of English enables speakers to claim both global legibility and local authenticity.

French incorporation serves primarily for mockery and resistance expression, indexing Francophone authority structures that speakers then reject or ridicule through Pidgin commentary. This pattern represents novel findings for Cameroon pragmatics research, demonstrating how dominated languages can be strategically deployed to represent oppression before resisting it. The phrase "les soldats" quoted before predicting military defeat exemplifies this pragmatic strategy, using French to voice government power before Pidgin undermines that power through prophesied failure. Such French-to-Pidgin transitions accomplish complex ideological work, simultaneously acknowledging Francophone dominance while asserting resistance against it.

Triadic code-meshing, though less frequent, achieves maximal inclusivity by addressing all linguistic communities simultaneously. Speakers employing triadic patterns position themselves as cosmopolitan mediators capable of bridging linguistic divides within the Anglophone community and potentially reaching across the Anglophone-Francophone divide. This sophisticated audience design demonstrates high metalinguistic awareness and pragmatic competence, revealing that code-meshing represents strategic communicative work rather than random switching or linguistic interference. Platform differences in code-meshing reflect audience design principles wherein speakers adjust linguistic choices to anticipated audiences and communicative purposes. WhatsApp's relatively private group contexts enable Pidgin-dominant communication among known participants sharing linguistic and cultural backgrounds. X's public, potentially global reach encourages English-dominant posting oriented toward international legitimacy and media attention. These platform-specific patterns demonstrate that digital environments are not linguistically neutral but rather shape pragmatic choices through their distinctive affordances and audience structures.

#### 5.4 Buea Context Specificity and Implications

Buea's status as university town amplifies linguistic hybridity in ways that distinguish crisis discourse here

from patterns in other Anglophone regions. University students and graduates possess substantial competence in academic English registers while maintaining connections to Pidgin-speaking communities, creating pragmatic repertoires that enable sophisticated navigation between formal and informal, local and global, elite and grassroots communicative contexts. This educational positioning contrasts with rural separatist strongholds where discourse may exhibit greater monolingual Pidgin usage reflecting different demographic profiles.

The University of Buea itself functions as contested site within crisis narratives, having experienced prolonged closures that disrupted thousands of students' educational trajectories. Many research participants bore direct impacts of campus shutdowns, creating personal stakes in crisis mobilisation that inflect their digital communications with particular urgency and emotional investment. References to university experiences pervade the corpus, positioning educational disruption as both grievance motivating resistance and evidence of government oppression justifying protest actions.

Temporal factors also shape Buea discourse specificity. Data collection during 2025, coinciding with separatist referendum efforts and intensified government security operations, captured communications during heightened mobilisation and risk periods. The 15 percentage point increase in implicature usage during months of prominent activist arrests demonstrates responsive adjustment to changing surveillance environments. This temporal sensitivity suggests that pragmatic patterns identified here may represent crisis peak dynamics rather than stable communication norms, highlighting the importance of longitudinal research tracking how digital resistance discourse evolves across different crisis phases.

Gender dynamics in Buea crisis discourse merit further attention beyond preliminary patterns identified in stance analysis. Female research participants constituted approximately 40% of the sample, reflecting women's substantial involvement in resistance communications despite patriarchal structures within some separatist organisations. The slight tendency toward higher positive alignment rates in female-authored posts compared to male-authored posts suggests potential gendered differences in resistance performance, with women perhaps engaging in more solidarity-building discourse while men more frequently employ oppositional stance. However, these patterns require cautious interpretation given limited gender coding and the dangers of essentializing gender differences.

Socioeconomic factors also intersect with linguistic repertoires and pragmatic strategies. Participants with higher educational attainment demonstrated greater code-meshing complexity, employing triadic patterns and sophisticated register shifts at higher rates than participants with secondary education only. However, Pidgin competence and deployment appeared relatively

constant across educational levels, reflecting its widespread use as regional lingua franca. These patterns suggest that while formal education expands linguistic repertoires, it does not displace local linguistic competencies that retain pragmatic centrality for community membership and solidarity expression.

## 6. Pedagogical Implications

Findings generate several implications for language education in Anglophone Cameroon and similar multilingual contexts characterised by linguistic marginalisation and political conflict. First, digital pragmatics literacy should be recognised as a critical communicative competence that deserves explicit pedagogical attention. Students already employ sophisticated implicature, stance-taking, and code-meshing strategies in their digital communications, yet educational systems typically ignore or pathologise these competencies, treating them as deviations from standard language norms rather than legitimate pragmatic resources.

Again, curriculum development should include explicit instruction in pragmatic competencies such as indirectness interpretation, stance construction, and translanguaging practice. Rather than prohibiting code-meshing or insisting on monolingual standard English, educators might validate students' multilingual repertoires while expanding their pragmatic awareness of how linguistic choices function in different contexts and for different audiences. This also has implications for teacher training which is a crucial lever for implementing such pedagogical shifts. Many teachers, particularly those from older generations or Francophone backgrounds, may lack appreciation for sophisticated pragmatic work evident in youth digital discourse. Professional development programmes should expose teachers to research findings demonstrating pragmatic complexity in code-meshing and digital communication, challenging deficit ideologies that position multilingual practices as linguistic corruption or evidence of inadequate standard language mastery.

Critical language awareness pedagogy offers productive frameworks for engaging students with relationships between language, power, and identity. Rather than treating language as politically neutral skill, critical approaches enable students to analyse how linguistic choices index identities, construct power relations, and function in political struggles. In Anglophone Cameroon contexts, such pedagogy might examine how Pidgin, English, and French carry different political meanings, how code choices position speakers relative to regional and national identities, and how linguistic marginalisation connects to broader political grievances.

Lastly, digital literacy programmes sponsored by development organisations or civil society groups offer alternative implementation pathways less constrained by

government oversight. Partnerships between universities and community organisations could facilitate research-informed programming that recognises youth pragmatic expertise while expanding their strategic awareness.

## 7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations qualify findings and suggest directions for future investigation. First, the corpus, while substantial at 2,500 posts, covers only a limited temporal window capturing communications during 2025 only. Crisis discourse likely evolves across different phases, with pragmatic strategies shifting in response to changing security environments, movement strategies, and political developments. Longitudinal research that tracks communications across multiple years would shed light on temporal dynamics and the evolution of resistance discourse patterns.

Second, the research focuses exclusively on Buea, limiting generalisability to other Anglophone regions experiencing crisis impacts. Rural areas, border regions, and the Northwest region may exhibit different pragmatic patterns reflecting distinct demographic profiles, linguistic ecologies, and crisis experiences. Comparative research examining multiple sites would reveal both shared patterns in Anglophone crisis discourse and location-specific variations reflecting local contexts.

Third, platform selection focused on WhatsApp and X, excluding other important digital spaces including Facebook, Telegram, and encrypted messaging applications that may host different communicative practices. Each platform offers distinctive affordances shaping pragmatic possibilities, and comprehensive understanding of digital crisis discourse requires attention to multiple platforms and their specific characteristics.

Fourth, the research examined text-based communication, excluding analysis of images, videos, memes, and other multimodal content that increasingly dominates digital discourse. Visual semiotics and multimodal pragmatics represent important frontiers for understanding contemporary crisis communication, particularly given young people's facility with image-based meaning-making.

Fifth, while the study identified code-meshing patterns and functions, it did not systematically examine intra-speaker variation in linguistic choices across different posts and contexts. Tracking individual speakers' pragmatic repertoires and strategic adjustments across different interactional contexts would provide finer-grained understanding of audience design and contextual adaptation.

Future research might address these limitations through several complementary approaches. Longitudinal ethnographic engagement with specific communities would enable tracking of discourse evolution while providing contextual depth for interpreting pragmatic choices. Multi-sited comparative research examining Buea, Bamenda, rural Northwest, and border

communities would reveal geographical variation patterns. Computational approaches offer potential for scaling analysis to larger corpora while identifying patterns not evident to manual coding.

Finally, intervention research examining pedagogical approaches that build on digital pragmatics competencies would provide practical knowledge for educators while testing theoretical claims about pragmatic expertise. Action research partnerships with schools or youth organisations could develop and evaluate curricula that validate multilingual practices, comparing learning outcomes and student engagement relative to traditional approaches.

## 8. Conclusion

This investigation of code-meshing and digital pragmatics in Buea social media during Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis reveals the sophisticated communicative strategies through which young people construct resistance identities, mobilise collective action, and navigate political risks. Three principal findings come out of the systematic corpus analysis. First, implicature enables veiled protest expression, with 73% of mobilisation calls employing indirectness through irony, metaphor, and other maxim violations that communicate resistance meanings while maintaining potential deniability. Second, stance-taking constructs solidarity and collective identity through predominant positive alignment patterns that build in-group cohesion, made visible through digital affordances like plus one marking that accumulate individual stances into recognisable political positions. Third, code-meshing serves strategic functions including scale negotiation between local and global audiences, identity indexing across elite and grassroots positions, and resistance expression through French mockery followed by Pidgin assertion.

These findings push pragmatics scholarship beyond structural description toward an understanding of language as a strategic resource for political agency in multilingual conflict contexts. While previous research documented Cameroon English grammar and phonology, this study demonstrates how pragmatic competencies function as resistance capital enabling collective mobilisation under conditions of surveillance and repression. Digital platforms amplify pragmatic possibilities through affordances that make stance visible, enable rapid information circulation, and connect local struggles to global audiences, fundamentally transforming the pragmatics of political communication.

The specificity of the Buea context that has surfaced through this analysis underscores the importance of situated investigation attending to local linguistic ecologies, demographic profiles, and crisis experiences. University town dynamics create distinctive patterns of hybrid discourse blending academic English registers with street Pidgin, enabling sophisticated navigation between formal and informal, elite and grassroots communicative

contexts. These patterns likely differ from discourse in rural separatist strongholds or in the Northwest region, suggesting that Anglophone crisis discourse encompasses substantial internal variation reflecting geographical and demographic diversity.

Code-meshing stands out as a particularly significant pragmatic resource, enabling speakers to simultaneously address multiple audiences, perform complex identities, and resist linguistic domination. By strategically blending Cameroon Pidgin English, Cameroon English, and French within single utterances or sequences, Buea youth demonstrate remarkable metalinguistic awareness and communicative sophistication. This finding challenges monolingual ideologies that treat code-switching as a linguistic deficit, instead revealing it as creative resource for navigating multilingual realities and political complexities.

The pedagogical implications of this study point toward additive approaches that validate students' existing pragmatic competencies while broadening their strategic awareness and repertoire flexibility. Rather than treating code-meshing and digital pragmatics as deviations requiring correction, educators might recognise these practices as sophisticated communicative resources deserving explicit pedagogical attention. Such recognition requires challenging deficit ideologies, revising assessment practices, and developing critical language awareness curricula that examine relationships between language, power, and identity.

This research speaks to several ongoing scholarly conversations. It advances digital pragmatics theory by demonstrating implicature and stance functions in politically repressive environments characterised by surveillance and consequences for dissent. It extends translanguaging practice frameworks by revealing code-meshing as strategic resource for scale negotiation and identity work in crisis contexts. It provides empirical evidence of sophisticated pragmatic competencies in African youth digital discourse, challenging deficit perspectives that position such communication as linguistically impoverished or deficient.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of combining quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative discourse interpretation. Statistical patterns in implicature types, stance distributions, and code-meshing frequencies provide robust evidence of systematic pragmatic strategies, while close reading of individual examples illuminates the nuanced ways these strategies accomplish political work. This mixed-methods approach enables both breadth and depth in understanding digital resistance discourse.

Looking forward, the Anglophone Crisis's trajectory remains uncertain. However, the pragmatic competencies documented in this research suggest that regardless of political outcomes, Buea youth have developed sophisticated communicative resources that will serve them in navigating ongoing linguistic and political complexities. Whether the crisis resolves through

negotiated autonomy, continued conflict, or some other path, the digital pragmatic literacies these young people have cultivated represent valuable forms of communicative capital for future political engagement, educational achievement, and professional success.

For scholars, educators, and policymakers concerned with multilingual contexts, political conflicts, and digital communication, this research offers several key insights. First, marginalised groups often develop sophisticated pragmatic strategies invisible to those who control dominant institutions. Second, digital platforms, despite surveillance risks, enable new forms of resistance and solidarity impossible in earlier eras. Third, linguistic diversity represents resource rather than obstacle when speakers possess metalinguistic awareness and strategic competence. Fourth, educational systems that validate rather than suppress multilingual practices better serve students' communicative development and political agency.

This study ultimately argues for the recognition of code-meshing and digital pragmatics as legitimate areas of scholarly inquiry and pedagogical attention, particularly in contexts where linguistic marginalisation intersects with political conflict. By taking seriously the communicative practices of young people in crisis, we can better understand both the challenges they face and the creative resources they mobilise in response. Such understanding benefits not only academic knowledge production but also practical efforts to support youth development, promote social justice, and navigate pathways toward peace in linguistically diverse, politically contested societies.

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