MULTILIGUALISM AS AN ASSET TO REINFORCE MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE AND SOCIAL COHESION IN COTE D'IVOIRE

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Abstract:

This study investigates the role of multilingualism in enhancing mutual acceptance and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. Given the country's glaring ethnolinguistic diversity, the research seeks to show that multilingualism can reinforce mutual acceptance and social cohesion. A structured interview has been used as the data collection instrument. The quantitative data analysis inspired by Aron et al.'s (1997) theoretical findings has permitted to reveal a positive correlation between multilingualism and increased mutual acceptance among diverse ethnolinguistic groups. The findings indicate that multilingualism can be an asset to reinforce mutual acceptance and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. By recognizing multilingualism as an asset, Côte d'Ivoire can strengthen its social fabric, enhance mutual acceptance, and foster a cohesive society. By highlighting the benefits of multilingualism, this research can help stakeholders in their efforts to achieve genuine social cohesion and inform policymakers about strategies to promote intercultural dialogue in order to foster a more cohesive society and mutual understanding in Côte d'Ivoire.
Keywords : *Multilingualism, language, Social cohesion, Mutual acceptance, Ethnolinguistic diversity, Côte d'Ivoire, Intergroup, Outgroup.*

Résumé

Cette étude examine le rôle du multilinguisme dans l'amélioration de l'acceptation mutuelle et de la cohésion sociale en Côte d'Ivoire. Compte tenu de la diversité ethnolinguistique du pays, l'étude à pour objectif de montrer que le multilinguisme est un atout pour renforcer l'acceptation mutuelle et la cohésion sociale. Une interview structurée a été utilisée comme instrument de collecte de données. L'analyse quantitative des données, inspirée par les résultats théoriques d'Aron et al. (1997), a permis de révéler

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une corrélation positive entre le multilinguisme et l'acceptation mutuelle entre les différents groupes ethnolinguistiques. Les résultats indiquent que le multilinguisme peut être un atout pour renforcer l'acceptation mutuelle et la cohésion sociale en Côte d'Ivoire. En admettant le multilinguisme comme un atout, la Côte d'Ivoire peut renforcer son tissu social, améliorer l'acceptation mutuelle et favoriser une société cohésive. En mettant en lumière les avantages du multilinguisme, cette recherche peut aider les décideurs dans la quête d'une véritable cohésion sociale en les aidant à développer des stratégies pour favoriser le dialogue interculturel afin de construire une société plus cohésive en Côte d'Ivoire.
Mots clés : *Multilinguisme, Langue, Cohésion sociale, Acceptation mutuelle, Diversité ethnolinguistique, Intergroupe, Groupe extérieur, Côte d'Ivoire*

Introduction

Multilingualism refers to a person's ability to understand and speak several languages, as well as the co-existence of different language communities in a geographical area. It is both an individual and a societal phenomenon. When defined in reference to an individual being able to speak more than two languages, this is known as individual multilingualism. At the state level, the term "multilingualism" is often used interchangeably with "linguistic diversity." This study stresses the importance of individual and group multilingualism for social cohesion. Social cohesion "describes the bonds or 'glue' that bring people together in a society, particularly in the context of ethnolinguistic diversity" (H. Schmeets, 2012, p. 128). It is the cement that connects or brings communities, such as ethnolinguistic groups, together in an area characterized by diversity.

Africa is the most linguistically diverse continent. All African countries are characterized by ethnolinguistic diversity (P. L. Melvyn, 2009). Côte d'Ivoire is a prototype of this linguistic diversity or societal multilingualism. Linguistic diversity has been interpreted differently regarding its connection to social cohesion. On the one hand, some authors

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consider it a hindrance to social cohesion and national development. For J. Fishman (1972), it aggravates political sectionalism with the emergence of many political parties clustered around ethnic and linguistic similarities. According to D. Newby and H. Penz (2009), barriers to communication are often a threat to societal cohesion. This is because prejudice and ignorance feed on the lack of access to the cultural norms and worldviews of others. Language barriers significantly impact trust formation, distorting and damaging intergroup relations and giving rise to insecurity and distrust.

On the other hand, there are authors who argue that multilingualism should not be seen as a threat. A. Bamgbose (2000) adopts the view that diversity in ethnolinguistic identities within a country should not be demonized, but rather seen as an asset for multilingual countries. G. Meier (2018) agrees, stating that instinctively, the more languages we speak, the more open we become to other people's cultures. Multilingualism promotes social tolerance and embodies values and skills for living together. Social tolerance is the process of acquiring fair, objective, and permissive attitudes toward opinions, beliefs, and practices that differ from one's own. This work, titled "Multilingualism as an Asset to Reinforce Mutual Acceptance and Social Cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire," aligns with this perspective, seeking to demonstrate that multilingualism can enhance social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. It aims to propose multilingualism as an asset to reinforce mutual acceptance and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire.

The challenge of nationalism, especially in the present millennium, is to build strong, economically viable pluralistic nations from ethnolinguistic heterogeneity. Thus, the findings of this study can assist stakeholders in their efforts to achieve genuine social cohesion. By recognizing multilingualism as an asset, Côte d'Ivoire can strengthen its social fabric, enhance mutual acceptance, and foster a cohesive society where all

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citizens feel valued and included. It can also provide insights into social dynamics in a multilingual context and inform strategies to enhance social harmony. Although it is argued that multilingualism is not a problem, it should be acknowledged that it has implications for many inter-ethnic conflicts as a catalyst. Ethnolinguistic diversity raises awareness of differences and leads to social categorization, resulting in "us" and "them" dichotomies, in which "them" becomes easy to demonize. This demonization may at least serve as a catalyst for conflict (H. Tajfel and J. C. Turner, 1979). Therefore, it is essential to seek ways or strategies to circumvent this and strengthen the bonds between the different ethnolinguistic groups of the country. The core questions are: can multilingualism boost mutual acceptance and intergroup cooperation in Côte d'Ivoire? Can multilingualism be promoted as an asset to reinforce social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire? One can hypothesize that multilingualism positively influences mutual acceptance and intergroup cooperation among the different ethnolinguistic groups in Côte d'Ivoire; and multilingualism can be perceived as an asset that reinforces social cohesion in the country. The theoretical findings of Aron et al. (1997) and Multilingualism and Cognitive Flexibility Theory will be of interest in this study as a theoretical foundation.

Research by psychologists indicates that sustained, reciprocal self-disclosure is crucial for developing intimacy in relationships. According to Aron et al. (1997), sharing important personal information fosters deeper connections when individuals feel understood and accepted. Additionally, spending time together and sharing interests and feelings enhance these bonds. However, disclosing significant personal information in a non-native language can be uncomfortable and less impactful (Aron et al., 1997). Doing this in a person's preferred language is more comfortable and effective.

A person's preferred language is the one they are most

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comfortable using, often influenced by their early language experiences. In the context of this study, the preferred languages of the people investigated are their mother tongues or ethnic languages. These languages are those with which they identify; the languages they dream and think in; and the languages they primarily heard while learning to speak. It is worth noting that an individual's preferred language may not always be their first language or mother tongue, such as in cases where a child's family moves frequently and they learn a different language soon after acquiring their first language (O. Oludamini et al., 2010). However, it can generally be assumed that most people will prefer their first language over any other. The preference for a language stems from the fact that languages convey and transmit much more than mere words.

According to O. Oludamini (2010), languages go beyond mere words and structures to imply emotional connotations, cultural importance, and spiritual significance. This means that there is an emotional attachment between people and their preferred language. Consequently, for Aron et al. (1997), to foster intimacy with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, it is vital to understand and communicate in their preferred languages, which helps build emotional connections. It is beneficial to speak and understand other people's preferred languages, as this develops affective connections. This is reinforced by W. M. Weikun et al. (2007), who found that this pattern is evident even in infants, as they prefer people who speak languages and accents they have heard. One can infer that multilingualism is very important for building intergroup relationships. This importance of multilingualism is further enlightened by Multilingualism and Cognitive Flexibility Theory.

Multilingualism and Cognitive Flexibility Theory posits that multilingual individuals exhibit greater acceptance of ethnic out-groups due to enhanced cognitive flexibility, which is the

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ability to adapt and recognize multiple perspectives. Research indicates that bilinguals show increased cognitive flexibility, leading to reduced prejudice against ethnolinguistic out-groups. Studies by M. Rokeach (1948) and R. J. Crisp and R. N. Turner (2010) support the idea that cognitive flexibility and exposure to cultural diversity foster out-group tolerance. This phenomenon, linked to deprovincialization which involves acknowledging and valuing alternative cultural views suggests that multilingualism not only enhances cognitive skills but also promotes acceptance of diversity. Empirical evidence indicates that cognitive flexibility is developed through multiligualism (A. Kozulin, 1998), hypothesizing that greater cognitive flexibility and deprovincialization contribute to reduced out-group prejudice.

1. Methodology

To reveal multilingualism as an opportunity to boost social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire, this research employs a quantitative method. Quantitative research is a systematic investigation that primarily focuses on exploring the relationships or correlations between variables or phenomena. It aims to determine relationships between variables, such as cause-and-effect, and to generalize findings from a sample to a larger population. Quantitative research is essential for deriving actionable insights from data, enabling researchers and decision-makers to base their conclusions on empirical evidence. This method is suitable for this research as it investigates the correlation between multilingualism and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. From selected samples, the researcher aims to generalize findings to all the ethnolinguistic groups of the country. Furthermore, the study is intended to prompt action from state policymakers in favor of social cohesion in the country.

ISBN : 978-2-493659-12- 5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° Spécial 10 Ans- ACAREF Août 2025

This investigation is based on an interview (Appendix) as the data collection instrument. In total, one hundred and fifty (150) people from three major ethnic groups, namely the Senufo (the researcher's ethnic group), the Baoule, and the Bete have been interviewed. For the findings to be relevant, feedback from individuals of different ethnolinguistic groups is required. The interviews were conducted in Nielle (the researcher's hometown), Sakassou (a Baoule city), and Daloa (a Bete city), respectively, in French, Senufo, Bete, and Baoule languages to increase the chances of collecting relevant data from the informants. As a native speaker of Senufo, the researcher had no problems conducting the interview in Senufo, his mother tongue or preferred language. However, in Sakassou and Daloa, the assistance of translators was necessary to explain and translate the questions, as not all the informants could understand and answer the questions in French.

In quantitative studies, sampling and sample size are crucial for the relevance of the results. Of W. Schofield's (1996) random and purposive sampling methods, random sampling is used. The sample size has been determined in line with Brown's sampling requirements. According to M. Brown (2001), if the sample size is in the range of twenty (20) to thirty (30), the distribution is considered normal, and its results can be generalized.

However, this study has some limitations. First and foremost, there is a regional focus, as it only includes three ethnic groups. This may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of multilingualism on social cohesion. The country is said to host more than fifty ethnic groups; thus, other groups may have different opinions that are not captured here. Additionally, the sample size considered is only fifty per ethnic group. Larger samples may produce different results. Furthermore, an interview is used as the sole

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data collection instrument, which may cause the study to face challenges related to the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Further research can build on this study to provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of multilingualism in fostering social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. Despite all the mentioned limitations, the findings can be considered a consistent ground for further research.

2. Findings

As mentioned in the research methodology, one hundred and fifty (150) individuals were interviewed. Of this total, eighty-six (86) were males and sixty-four (64) were females. The interviews revealed that they were all aged between thirty (30) and sixty (60). They are all functional members of their respective ethnolinguistic groups, as they all admitted they can speak their mother tongues or ethnic languages. This is crucial, as it determines their responses to the other questions in the interview. There is a strong attachment between people and their ethnic languages. This attachment to one's ethnic language is not just linguistic but deeply embedded in emotional, cultural, and social dimensions.

After the identification questions, the next question on the list was how informants feel when outgroup members engage with them in the language they are emotionally attached to. Considering the Senufo, none of the fifty (50) individuals interviewed felt indifferent; thirty-three (33), or 66%, admitted they feel liked and considered. Seventeen (17), or 34%, said they feel important when outgroup members engage with them in the Senufo language. When asked what feelings they have for outgroup members who communicate with them in Senufo, the majority (35), or 70%, stated they like or appreciate such outgroup individuals. Fifteen (15) individuals, corresponding to 30%, said they feel closer to them. No Senufo interviewee

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admitted having feelings of dislike for them.

Next, they were asked whether multilingualism or speaking one another's languages can foster interethnic cooperation and prevent conflict between different ethnolinguistic groups. To this question, forty-eight respondents, corresponding to 96%, replied "Yes." Only two (2) individuals, or 4%, answered "No". For the latter, there is no connection between speaking one another's languages and rapprochement between different ethnolinguistic groups. Regarding the last question, the vast majority, that is forty-eight (48) respondents or 96% think that multilingualism can be an asset to boost mutual acceptance and social cohesion. Two (2) respondents, or 4%, believe that multilingualism cannot be a catalyst for social cohesion. The bulk of the justification provided by the 96% is that if the ability to speak one another's languages is extended group-wide, this will result in trust-building and the reduction of ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and prejudice, which are often incentives for clashes. For them, this will undoubtedly lead to increased mutual acceptance and tolerance.

The Baoule respondents were asked the same questions. To the question of how they feel when outgroup members engage with them in Baoule, the majority responded that they feel important, liked, and considered. Indeed, twenty-eight (28) individuals (56%) admitted they feel liked and considered; while twenty-two (22) respondents (44%) said they feel important. None of them answered they feel indifferent. Regarding their feelings for outgroup members who communicate with them in Baoule, they all acknowledged having positive feelings for them. In fact, thirty-one (31) Baoule interviewees (62%) replied they like or appreciate such outgroup members. Nineteen (19) interviewees (38%) stated they feel close to them. No Baoule respondent said they dislike them or have no positive feelings for them.

ISBN : 978-2-493659-12- 5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° Spécial 10 Ans- ACAREF Août 2025

When answering the next question—whether speaking one another's languages can facilitate interethnic cooperation and prevent conflict—forty-six (46) Baoule informants (92%) answered "Yes" that multilingualism can strengthen intergroup rapprochement and help prevent possible intergroup clashes or conflicts. In answering the last question, the same 92% concluded that multilingualism is an asset for boosting mutual acceptance and social cohesion. Only four (4) respondents (8%) held the opposite view that there is no connection between multilingualism and social cohesion. The gist of the justifications provided by the majority of the Baoule interviewees who answered "Yes" is that multilingualism will bring people closer, build trust between people of different cultural backgrounds, and promote tolerance, which in turn will prevent possible intergroup clashes.

The third and final group investigated were the Bete in Daloa. The vast majority, forty-eight (48) respondents corresponding to (96%) said they feel valued, considered, or liked when outgroup members engage with them in the Bete language to which they are emotionally attached. One (1) individual (2%) replied he feels close to them, while another individual (2%) does not feel moved when outgroup members speak with them in Bete language. In return, forty-five (45) interviewees (90%) develop positive feelings, including liking and appreciation for them. Only five (5) interviewees (10%) declared they have no particular feelings for outgroup individuals who can communicate with them in Bete, their ethnic language. Additionally, forty-three (43) respondents (86%), representing the vast majority, replied that being able to use one another's languages can facilitate intergroup cooperation and help reduce or prevent interethnic clashes. Seven (7) interviewees (14%) believe there is no connection between speaking one another's languages and interethnic cooperation or understanding. Ultimately, forty-three (43)

ISBN : 978-2-493659-12- 5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° Spécial 10 Ans- ACAREF Août 2025

respondents (86%) acknowledged that being able to understand and speak outgroup languages can be an asset for catalyzing mutual acceptance, interethnic cooperation, and social cohesion. Their justifications articulate around the idea that multilingualism makes individuals from different ethnolinguistic groups more open and tolerant to one another, which will ultimately result in social cohesion.

As can be seen, on average, out of the one hundred and fifty (150) interviewees from the three ethnic groups investigated, 72.66% admit they feel liked, appreciated, and valued when outgroup members communicate with them in their languages of identification. In return, 74% of the total number of interviewees say they like, appreciate, and feel close to outgroup members who engage with them in their ethnic languages. Conversely, 26% affirm they feel indifferent to outgroup members who can use their language. Furthermore, the vast majority of the respondents, 91.33%, inferred that being able to use one another's languages can foster mutual acceptance and interethnic cooperation. Based on this, they concluded that multilingualism can serve as an asset to boost mutual acceptance and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. Only 8.66% of the total number of respondents believe there is no causal relationship between multilingualism and mutual acceptance or social cohesion.

One can infer from the feedback of the vast majority that multilingualism or the ability to understand and speak outgroup languages is critical for establishing good relationships. As A. Aron et al. (1997) argue, the key to enhanced intimacy and good relationships between people of different ethnolinguistic backgrounds is their ability to understand and communicate in one another's languages. This is corroborated by the feedback provided by the vast majority of the respondents from the three ethnic groups investigated. Indeed, the vast majority of informants acknowledged they feel considered, appreciated, and

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valued when outgroup members communicate with them in their native languages, which triggers positive feelings toward outgroup members in return. As late Nelson Mandela stated, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."[1] Speaking to people in their preferred language is very important, as it shows respect for their cultural background.

Language is a critical part of the identity of an ethnic group. Being able to communicate in the language of a different group while being an outgroup member shows that you value that group. Sharing an outgroup language is a powerful tool for building positive relationships with the members of the outgroup. It allows individuals to connect with others from different cultures and backgrounds, understand their perspectives and experiences, and share their own in return. In other words, the ability to speak an outgroup language helps build trust and rapport. By breaking language barriers, one can successfully connect with outgroup members on a deeper level, building relationships grounded in mutual respect and acceptance. According to D. Newby and H. Penz (2009), barriers to communication are often a threat to cohesion between different cultural groups, as stereotypes, prejudice, and ignorance feed on the lack of access to other people's cultures through their modes of communication. Language barriers significantly impact trust formation; they can distort and damage intergroup relations and give rise to insecurity and distrust.

By breaking language barriers, one can build bridges between different ethnolinguistic groups and promote greater intergroup appreciation and liking, which can result in mutual acceptance. Speaking an outgroup language signals to its members that you are interested in or appreciate their cultural perspectives. This, in turn, can help dismantle ethnocentrism,

[1] https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/nelson_mandela_121685

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stereotypes, and prejudices that, according to H. Tajfel and J. C. Turner (1979), can be catalysts of conflict. The ability to speak other people's languages is critical for cooperation and collaboration (J. Thomas and D. McDonagh, 2013), and intergroup collaboration is crucial for achieving cohesion. This means that if one learns an outgroup language in addition to their mother tongue or first language (L1) and thus learns its cultural norms, ways, and values, this will be beneficial for intergroup relations and establish the links needed for efficient intergroup cooperation.

What is more, as explained by Multilingualism and Cognitive Flexibility Theory, the more languages people speak, the more they will be accepting other ethnolinguistic out-groups. This is due to an increase in cognitive flexibility and deprovincialization that make the reevaluation of out-groups easier (M. Rokeach, 1948). Cognitive flexibility is more developed in multilinguals. If the people of the different ethnolinguistic groups of Côte d'Ivoire learn one another's languages, they will be more cognitively flexible and deprovincialized. Since deprovincialization implies relativizing one's culture, it can also entail the recognition of out-group cultures as being valuable, which makes out-groups more likable (A. Kozulin, 1998). Similarly, multilinguals show increased cognitive flexibility, leading to reduced prejudice against ethnolinguistic out-groups. The reduction of provincialized in-group ethnocentrism will encourage the individuals of the different ethnolinguistic groups to be less restrictive with regards to which out-group(s) they perceive themselves to share similarities with.

3. Discussion

The findings stand as an illustration of A. Aron et al.'s (1997) theoretical conclusions. They show how important

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speaking to someone in the language to which they are emotionally and culturally attached is. According to A. Aron et al. (1997), being able to speak one another's languages is critical for fostering intimacy and closeness with people of different linguistic backgrounds. The vast majority of respondents stated that they feel liked, appreciated, valued, and considered when outgroup members communicate with them in their preferred languages; in return, they develop positive feelings for the latter. This corroborates A. Aron et al.'s (1997) assertion that it is beneficial to understand and speak other people's preferred languages, as this develops an affective connection.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of multilingualism in creating a more cohesive and cooperative society in Côte d'Ivoire. By recognizing and capitalizing on the value of language as an asset or tool for establishing connections, ethnolinguistic groups can work together towards greater harmony and mutual understanding, which is crucial for social cohesion. The findings suggest that the ability to communicate across linguistic boundaries is not just an individual skill but a communal asset that can enhance social fabrics and reduce ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and prejudices that can lead to the demonization of outgroups and possible interethnic clashes (H. Tajfel and J. C. Turner, 1979). The findings also align with those of other researchers, such as A. A. Bamgbose (2000) and G. Meier (2018).

As G. Meier (2018) and A. Bamgbose (2000) concluded, multilingualism should be viewed as an asset which can be tapped to promote social tolerance and improve intergroup relations in multilingual settings. This is exactly the case in this study which has shown that multilingualism can boost social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. As S. Coetzee Van-Rooey (2016) argues, multilingual repertoires facilitate communication that enhances the building of better relationships and deeper

ISBN : 978-2-493659-12- 5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° Spécial 10 Ans- ACAREF Août 2025

understanding between different cultural groups. Consistent with the findings of this research, K. Siti (2024) concludes that promoting multilingualism and cultural diversity is a strategic investment in community resilience and prosperity. He highlights the importance of embracing linguistic and cultural diversity to build stronger, more inclusive, and cohesive societies.

However, the findings contradict the view that multilingualism is a problem. J. Fishman (1972) argues that multilingualism or ethnolinguistic diversity aggravates political sectionalism and causes the emergence of political parties clustered around ethnolinguistic similarities. U. Lucy (2020) underscores that multilingualism can lead to a crisis of identity and result in violence and ethnic clashes. The findings of these two works raise concerns about multilingualism. In other words, they support the postulate that multilingualism poses a danger. Contrary to the belief that multilingualism has negative implications, this research has revealed that multilingualism can be used to address potential cohesion-related problems. If, due to language barriers arising from ethnolinguistic plurality, communities distance themselves from one another and eventually demonize each other, these barriers can be broken down through intercultural communication—specifically, if individuals from different cultural groups learn to speak one another's languages. This indicates that linguistic diversity should not be seen as a threat to social cohesion but rather as an asset.

In any case, there are scholars who argue that ethnolinguistic diversity itself is not the root cause of misunderstandings and interethnic clashes or conflicts. For them, diversity is not the problem. J. Fishman (1986) attributes the root causes of intergroup conflicts to economic, political, and religious factors. Specifically, interethnic or intergroup clashes are caused by supra and paralinguistic factors. Multilingualism

ISBN : 978-2-493659-12- 5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° Spécial 10 Ans- ACAREF Août 2025

is merely a scapegoat that bears the blame for intergroup clashes and mistrust. For A. Bamgbose (1991, p. 7), "the association of multilingualism with divisiveness is unjustified, since language is a convenient scapegoat on which the real causes are usually hung." R. A. Dunmoye (1984, p. 126) argues that ethnolinguistic consciousness, in itself, does not jeopardize political stability and national unity; instead, it "becomes dysfunctional to the political system and clouds class consciousness when it degenerates into ethnic aggressiveness or group behavior patterned by competition and conflict rather than along the lines of mutual cooperation and peaceful coexistence." Ethnolinguistic consciousness refers to a group's awareness and pride in its ethnic and linguistic identity. It can foster a sense of belonging and community. However, when this consciousness becomes overly aggressive or hostile, leading to ethnic competition and conflict, it can disrupt the political system. Instead of contributing to a cohesive society, it can create divisions. When ethnolinguistic identity becomes the primary focus, it can obscure class issues. People may prioritize ethnic loyalty over shared economic interests, hindering solidarity among different groups. R. A. Dunmoye (1984) warns that when ethnolinguistic consciousness turns into aggression, it moves away from constructive engagement and cooperation, leading to conflict rather than peaceful coexistence.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore a positive correlation between multilingualism and social cohesion. They reveal that multilingualism positively influences intergroup cooperation and can thus be considered as an asset to foster mutual acceptance and social cohesion in côte d'ivoire.

Given the country's rich ethnolinguistic diversity, embracing multilingualism emerges as a crucial strategy for

ISBN : 978-2-493659-12- 5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° Spécial 10 Ans- ACAREF Août 2025

enhancing social harmony. The positive correlation identified between multilingualism and increased mutual acceptance among various ethnolinguistic groups unveils the potential for language to serve as a bridge rather than a barrier which often bears the blame for the emergence of intergroup clashes. When individuals from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds engage with one another in their respective preferred languages, it fosters feelings of appreciation, like, closeness, and connection. This reciprocal understanding not only enhances interpersonal relationships but also strengthens the social fabric or tightens the bonds between the different ethnolinguistic groups.

This research has a socio-utilitarian scope. It holds significant social interests by exploring how multilingualism can serve as a catalyst for mutual acceptance and social cohesion, ultimately contributing to a more unified and resilient society in côte d'ivoire. by highlighting the benefits of multilingualism, this research can help stakeholders in their efforts to achieve genuine social cohesion and inform policymakers about strategies to promote intercultural dialogue in order to foster a more cohesive society and mutual understanding in Côte d'ivoire. Promoting intergroup cooperation through multilingualism will address potential conflicts arising from ethnolinguistic and cultural differences and contribute to peacebuilding efforts.

To promote multilingualism as an asset to enhance social cohesion and mutual acceptance, specific language policies can be suggested. Bilingual education programs can be adopted. These models can incorporate local languages in the curricula so that students can learn the languages of other ethnolinguistic groups. Community language initiatives can also be promoted through language exchange programs; that is initiatives where individuals can practise different languages through cultural events or festivals that celebrate linguistic diversity and encourage people to learn and appreciate other people's

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languages and cultural practices. Implementing such policies will establish a supportive framework for multilingualism, enhance intergroup relations and contribute to social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire.

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Appendix: interview questions

I - Identification of subjects

1. Age
   [25-30] ☐ [40-50] ☐
   [30-40] ☐ [50-65] ☐
2. Gender Male ☐ Female ☐
3. Ethnolinguistic Belonging
   Senoufo ☐ Baoule ☐ Bete ☐

II – Multilingualism and social cohesion

1. Can you speak your ethnic language ? Yes ☐ No ☐
2. How do you feel or would you feel if an out-group member exchange with you in your ethnic language ?
   a. I feel indifferent ☐ c. I feel important ☐
   b. I feel liked and considered ☐
3. What feelings do you have or would you have for such people ?
   a. I dislike them ☐ c. I like them ☐
   b. I feel close to them ☐ d. I feel indifferent ☐
4. Do you think being able to speak one another's language can easier interethnic cooperation and prevent conflict ? Yes ☐ No ☐
5. Do you think multilingualism can be an asset for boosting mutual acceptance and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire ? Yes ☐ No ☐

   If Yes, justify .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

Thank you for answering these questions

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