

A group of children in rural Africa are gathered around a person wearing a red robe and a white animal head, possibly a dog or a goat. The person is holding a long, thin object, possibly a stick or a tool. The children are looking at the person with interest. The background shows a dirt path and some greenery.

Documenting multilingualism in rural Africa
The case of Lower Fungom

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 - National Endowment of the Humanities
 - The Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology
 - The Endangered Languages Documentation Programme
 - The University at Buffalo, State University of New York
- Numerous collaborators have also played an important role in developing the content discussed here, especially Pierpaolo Di Carlo, Rachel Ojong, and Penghang Liu

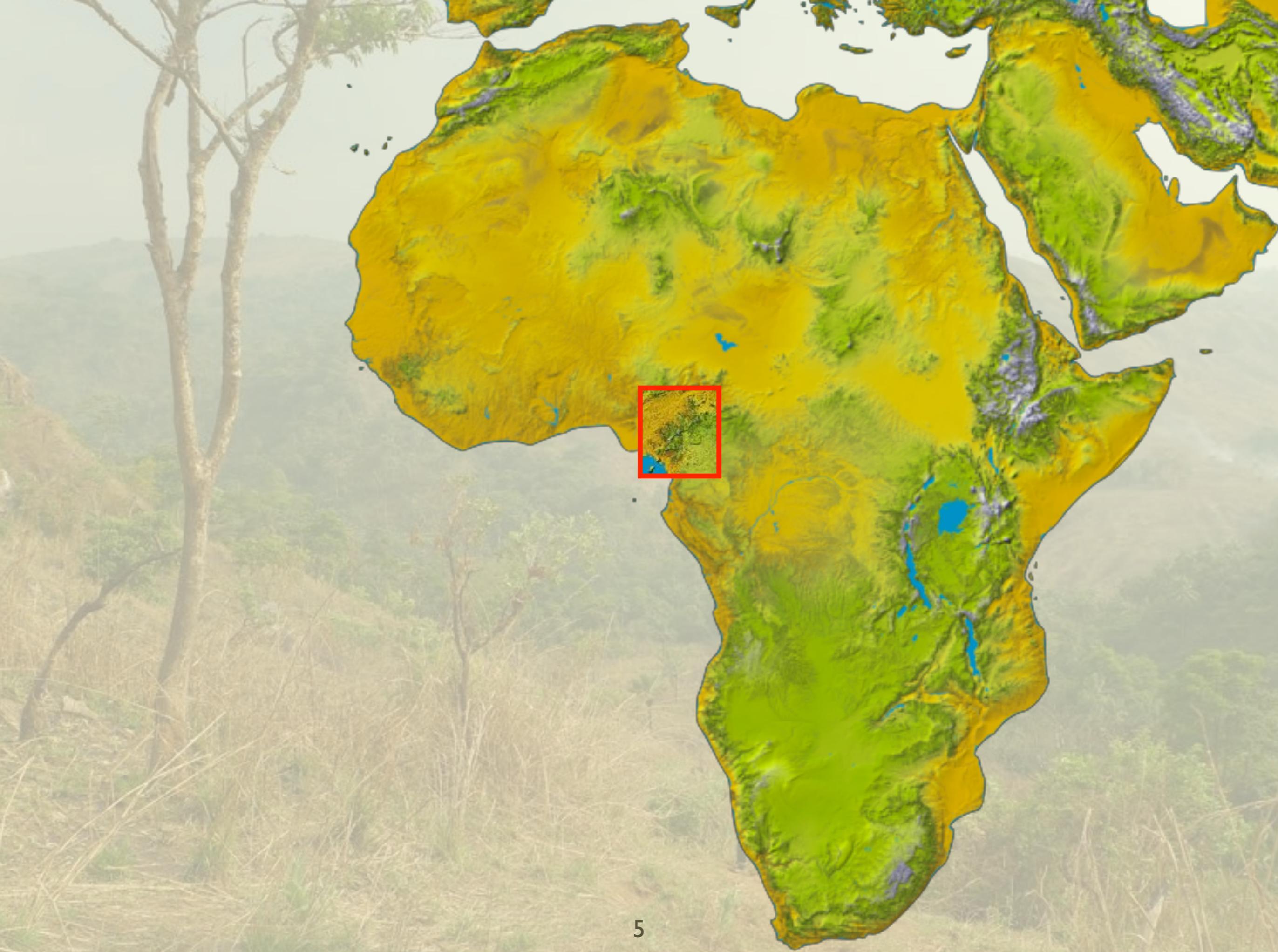


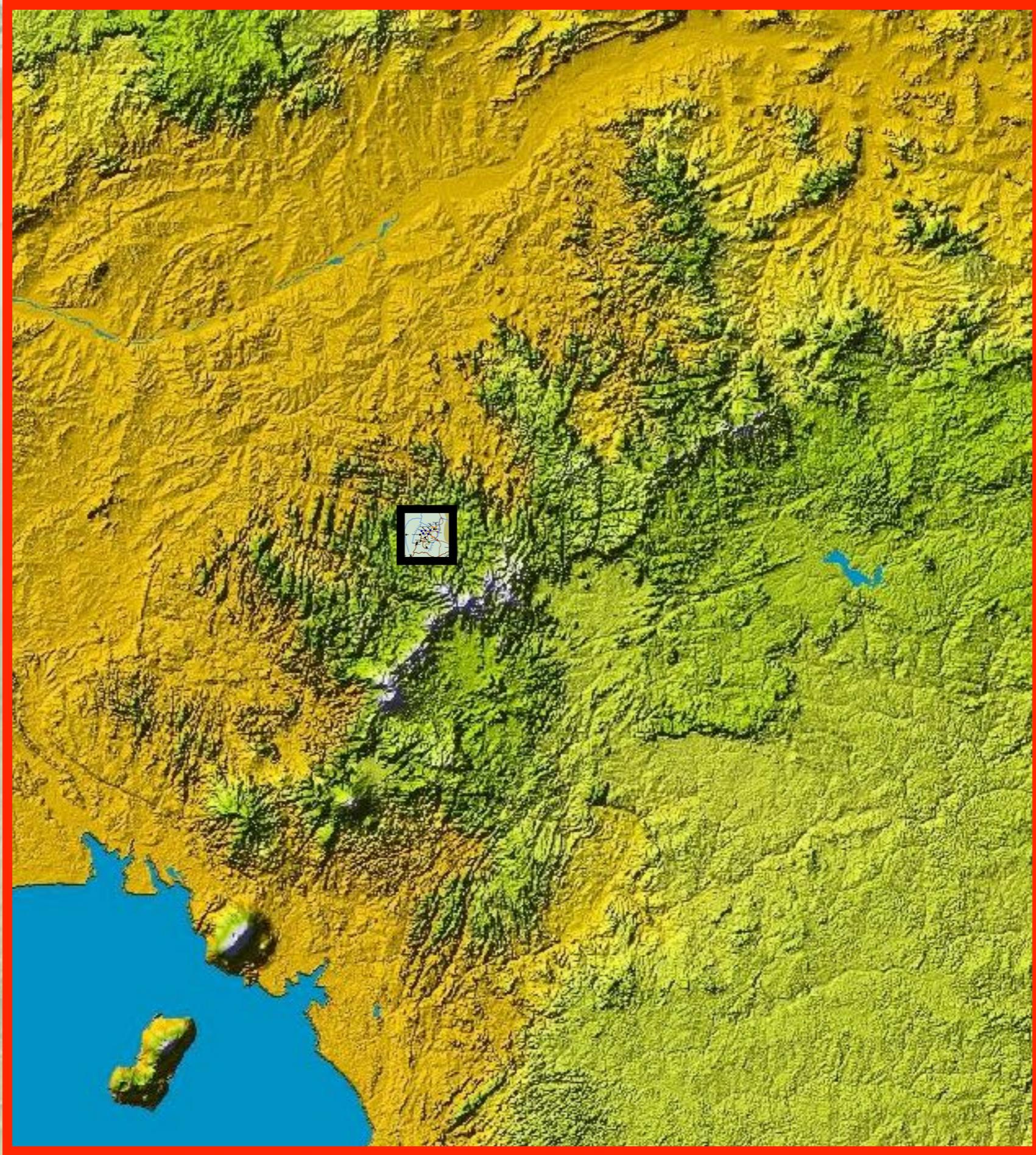
KPAAM-CAM

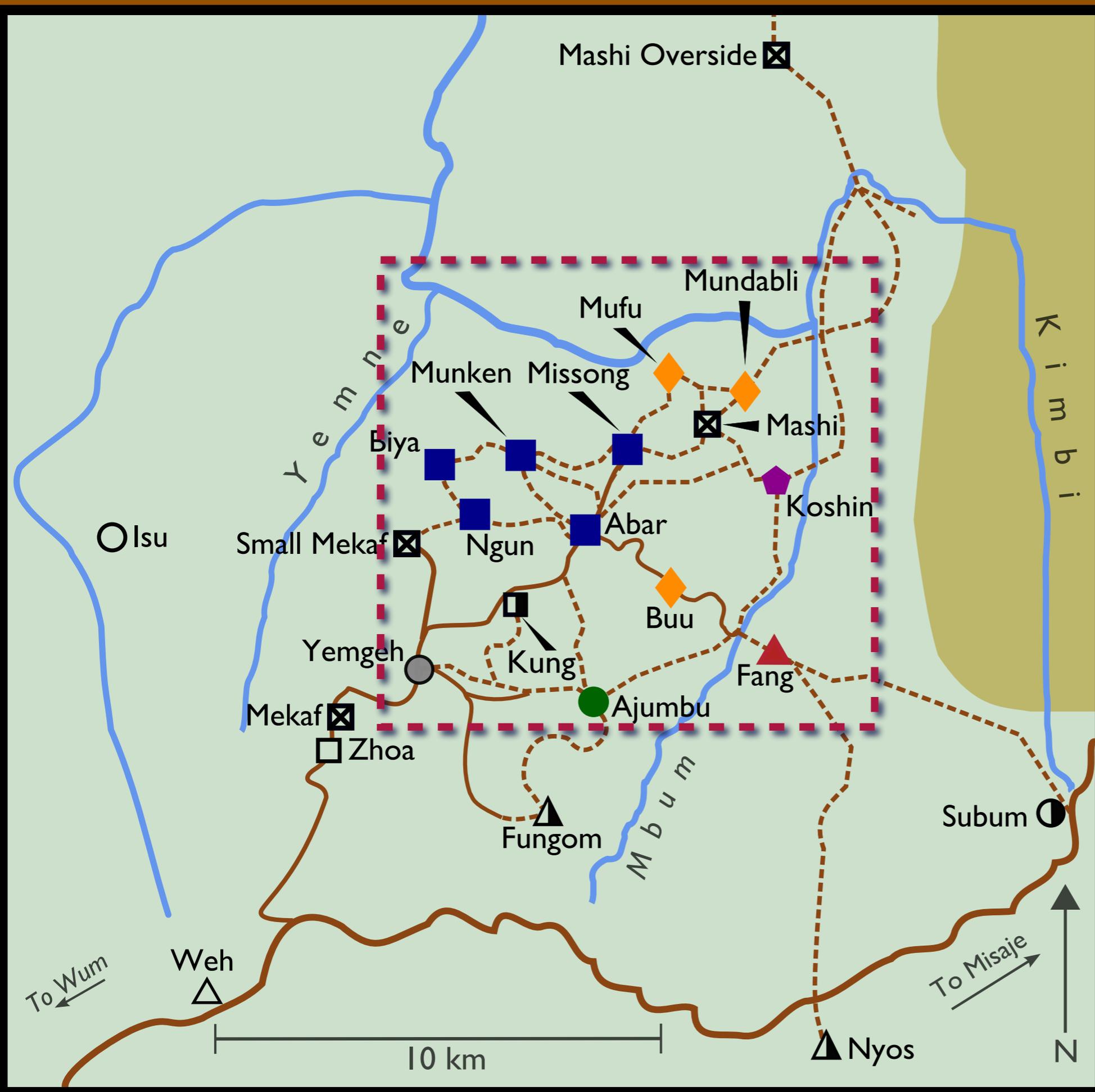
- Key Pluridisciplinary Advances in African Multilingualism
- A collaboration between U. Buffalo, U. Yaoundé I, U. Buea and the Catholic University of Cameroon, Bamenda
- Fieldwork, training models, and computational tools
- Long-term goal: Longitudinal investigation of language change in a diverse region of the Cameroonian Grassfields
- Current focus: Documenting multilingualism
- Earlier work: More traditional linguistic description
- See <http://buffalo.edu/~jcgood/lowerfungom.html>



Lower fungom
At the northern edge of the Grassfields







Lower Fungom

- 13 villages
- 7–9 “languages”
- 5 local isolates
- 2 dialect clusters
- 12,000(?) people
- Rural economy
- Localist attitudes
- Multilingualism/
multilectalism
pervasive

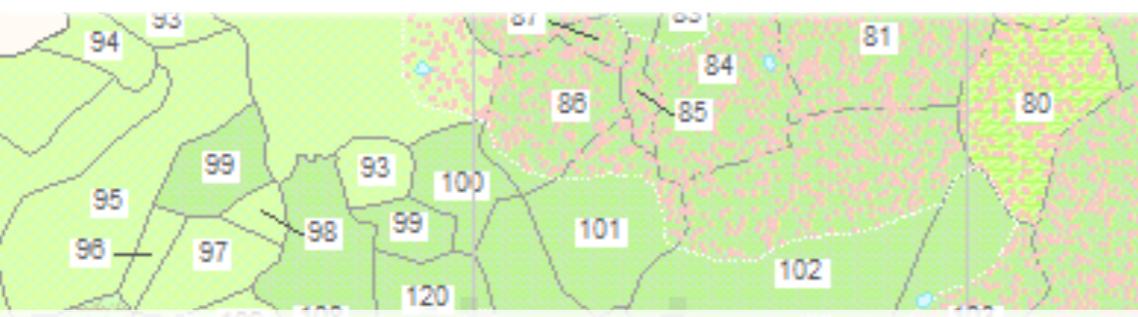


Typologizing multilingualisms
(Di Carlo, Good, and Ojong to appear)

Documenting multilingualism in Lower Fungom

Applications to broader linguistic concerns

African multilingualism

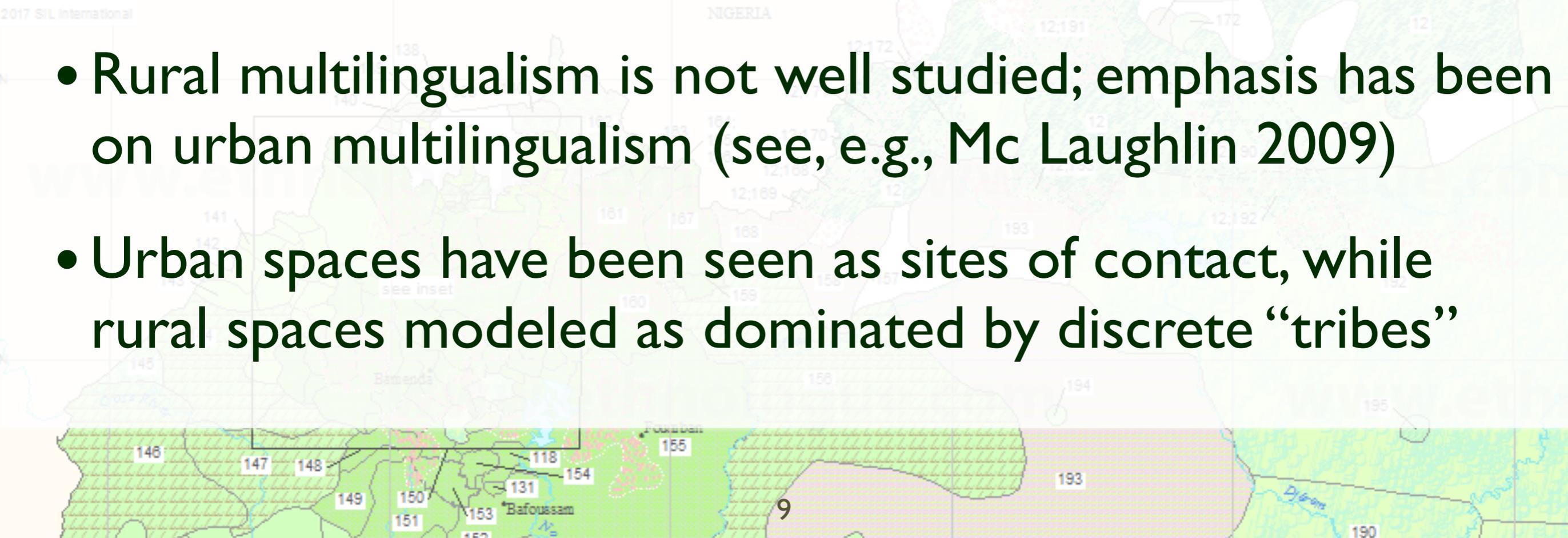


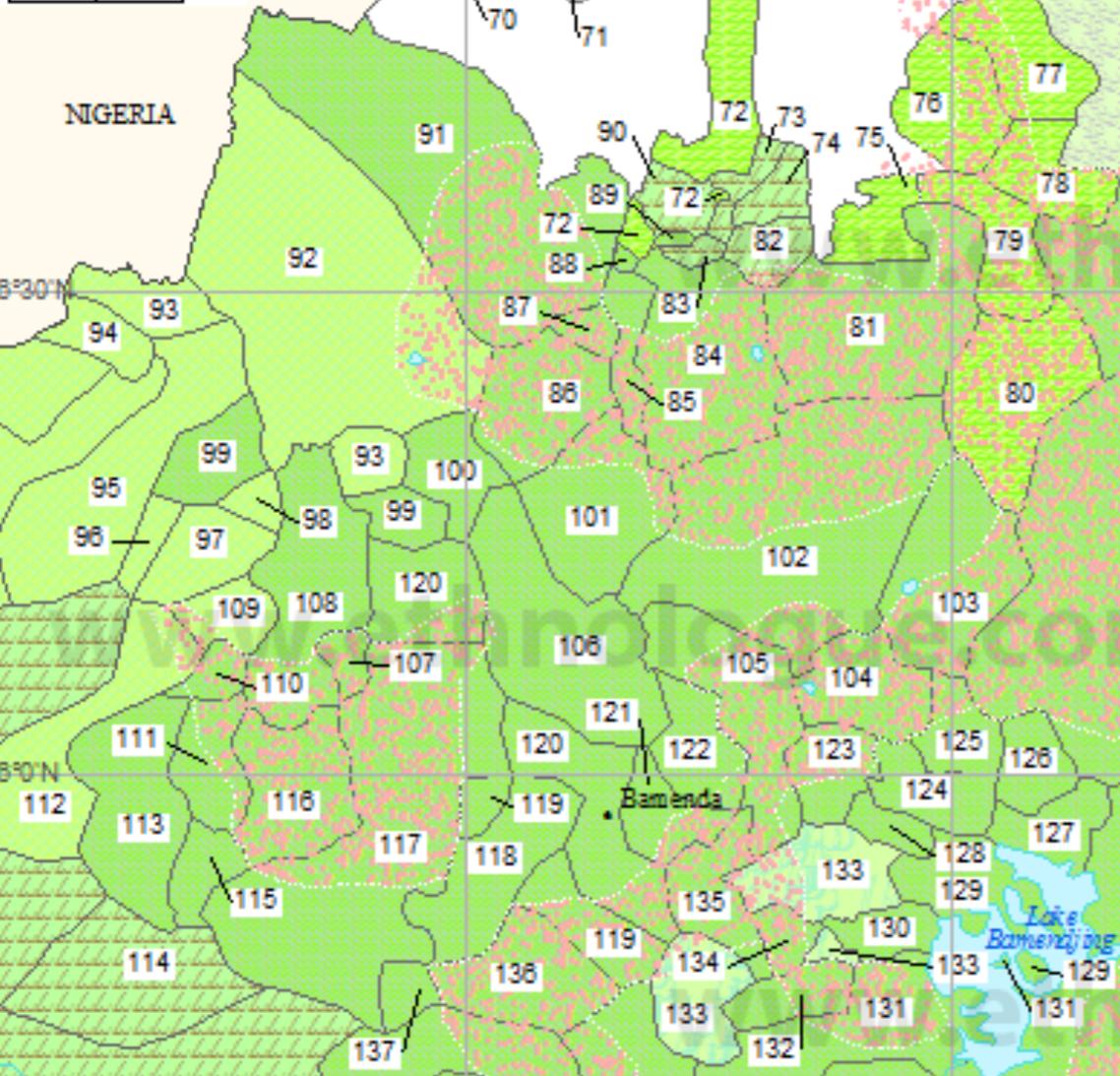
85 Kuk	109 Balo
86 Aghem	110 Atong
87 Weh	111 Menka
88 Zhoa	112 Manta

Notes:
1. White areas are sparsely populated or uninhabited.
2. Parentheses show the number of times a language's number appears on a map if more than once.



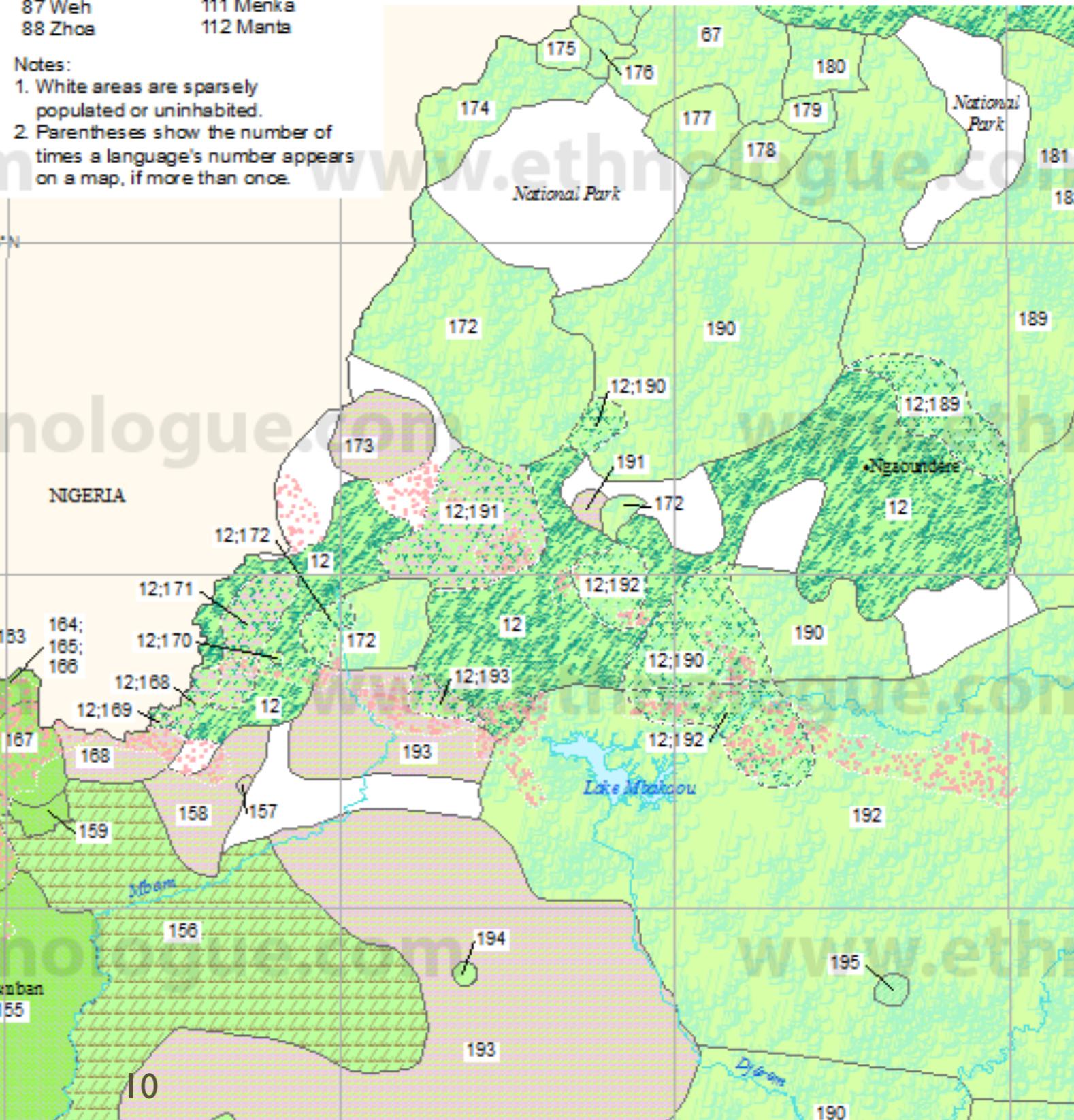
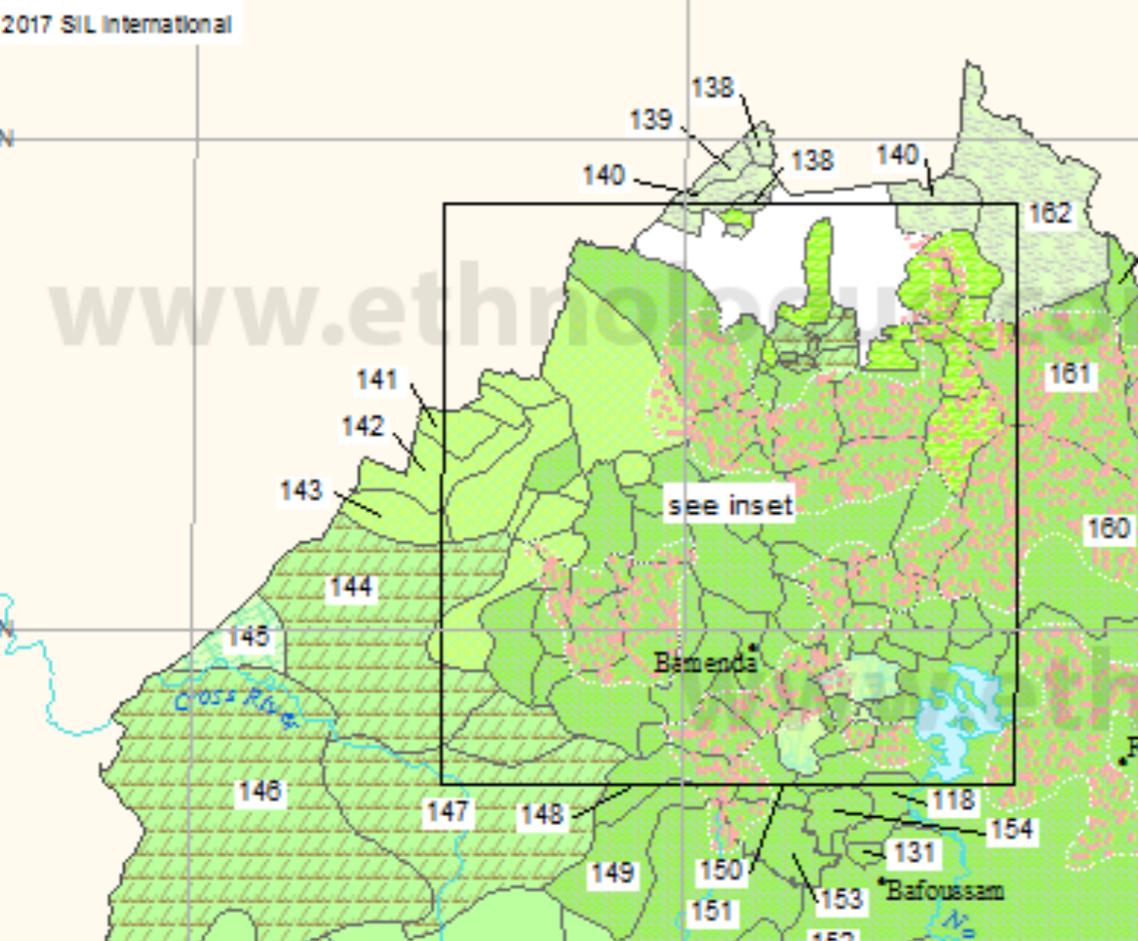
- Multilingualism is “the African lingua franca” (Fardon & Furniss 1994:4) and “multilingualism has been a fact of social life in Africa for a very long time” (Whiteley 1971:1)
- Rural multilingualism is not well studied; emphasis has been on urban multilingualism (see, e.g., Mc Laughlin 2009)
- Urban spaces have been seen as sites of contact, while rural spaces modeled as dominated by discrete “tribes”





75 Chungmboko	99 Beba (2)	122 Bamoli-Bambui	143 Ewant	164 Kwaja	185 Karang (1)
76 Kemedzung	100 Befang	123 Kenswei Nsei	144 Denya	165 Mfumte	186 Nzakamba
77 Naami	101 Laimbue	124 Bamunka	145 Bokyi	166 Ndaktup	187 Pana
78 Sari	102 Kom	125 Baba	146 Ejagham	167 Yamba	188 Kare
79 Ncane	103 Oku	126 Wushi	147 Kenyang	168 Cameroon	189 Dii (2)
80 Noone	104 Vengo	127 Bangolan	148 Mundani	169 Mambila (2)	190 Mbum (5)
81 Bum	105 Babanki	128 Bamali	149 Ngwe	170 Kamkam	191 Suga (2)
82 Fang [fak]	106 Bafut	129 Bambalang (2)	150 Ngombale	171 Bitare	192 Northwest
83 Ajumbu	107 Ngoshie	130 Bafanji	151 Yemba	172 Wawa	193 Gbaya (3)
84 Mmen	108 Ngwo	131 Mengaka (3)	152 Ghomálá'	173 Peere (4)	194 Vute (3)
85 Kuk	109 Balo	132 Bamenyam	153 Ngiemboon	174 Ndoola	195 Ewondo
86 Aghem	110 Atong	133 Nyong (3)	154 Ngomba	175 Samba Leko	196 Mbonga
87 Weh	111 Menka				
88 Zhoa	112 Manta				

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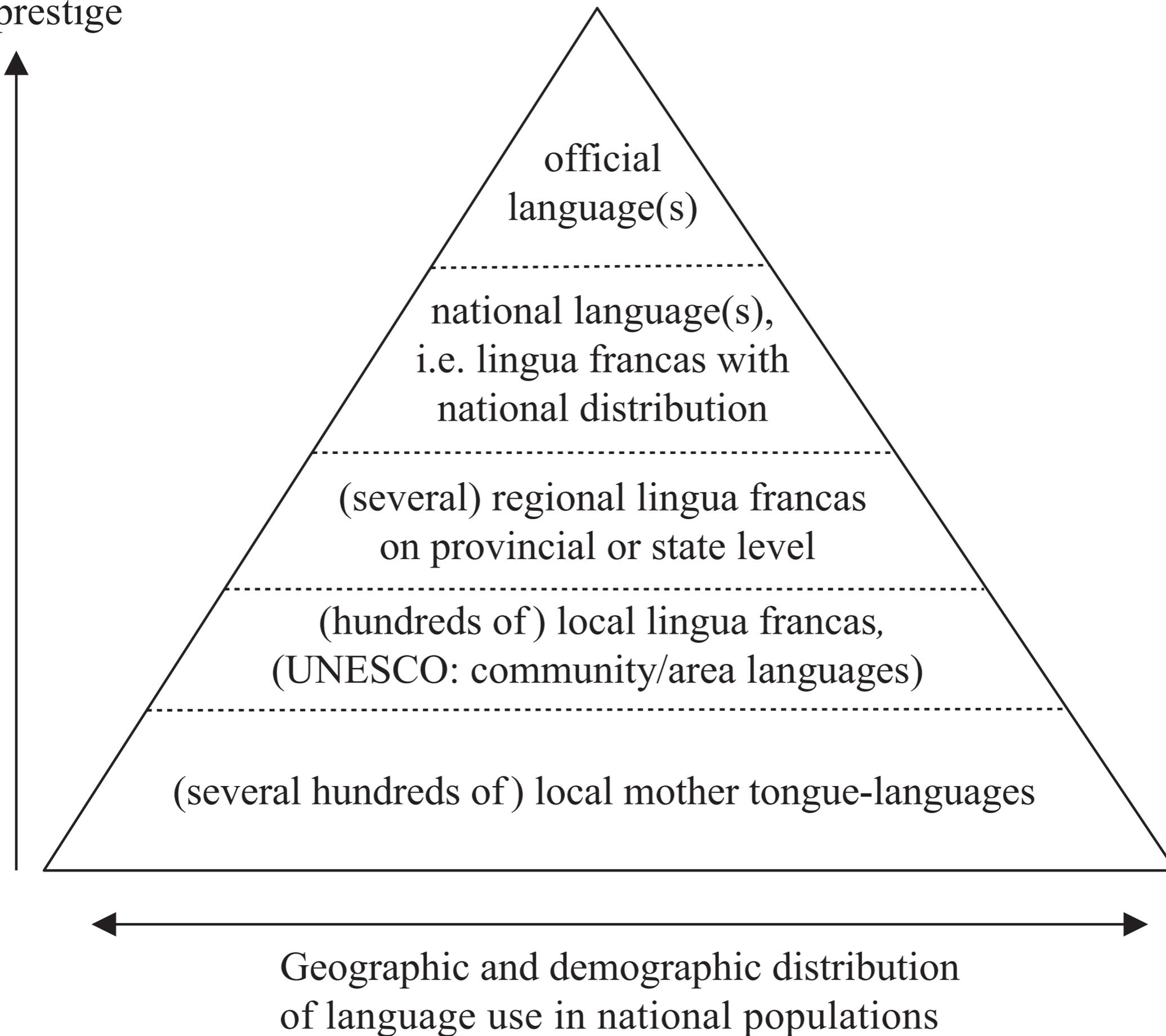
Polyglossic multilingualism

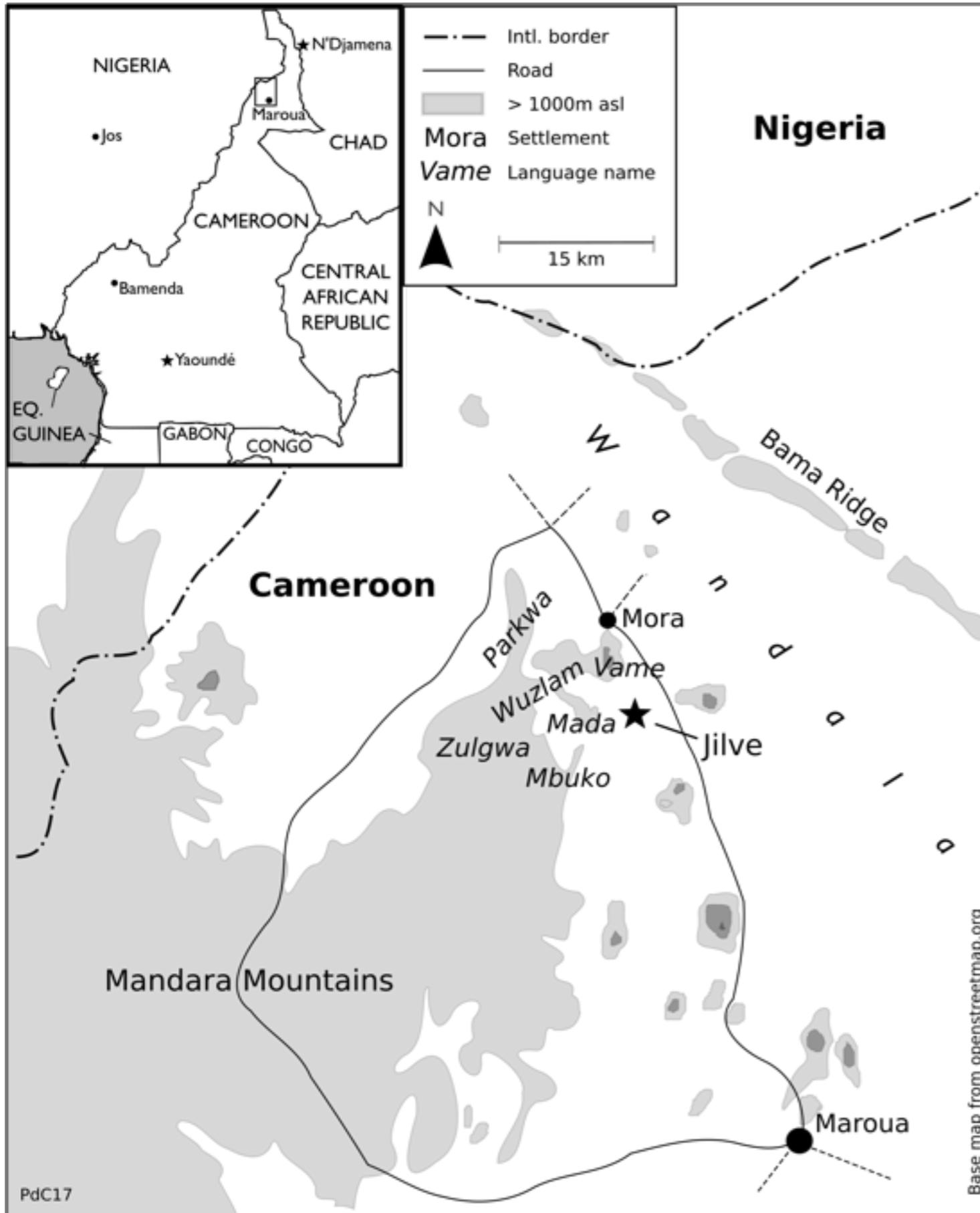


- “Whereas one set of behaviors, attitudes and values supported—and was expressed in—one language, another set of behaviors, attitudes and values supported and was expressed in the other (Fishman 1967:29).”
- This pattern is found in Africa, especially in urban environments, but it does not seem to be **endogenous**
- It seems to require a degree of social stratification that is not typical in rural contexts (including Lower Fungom)

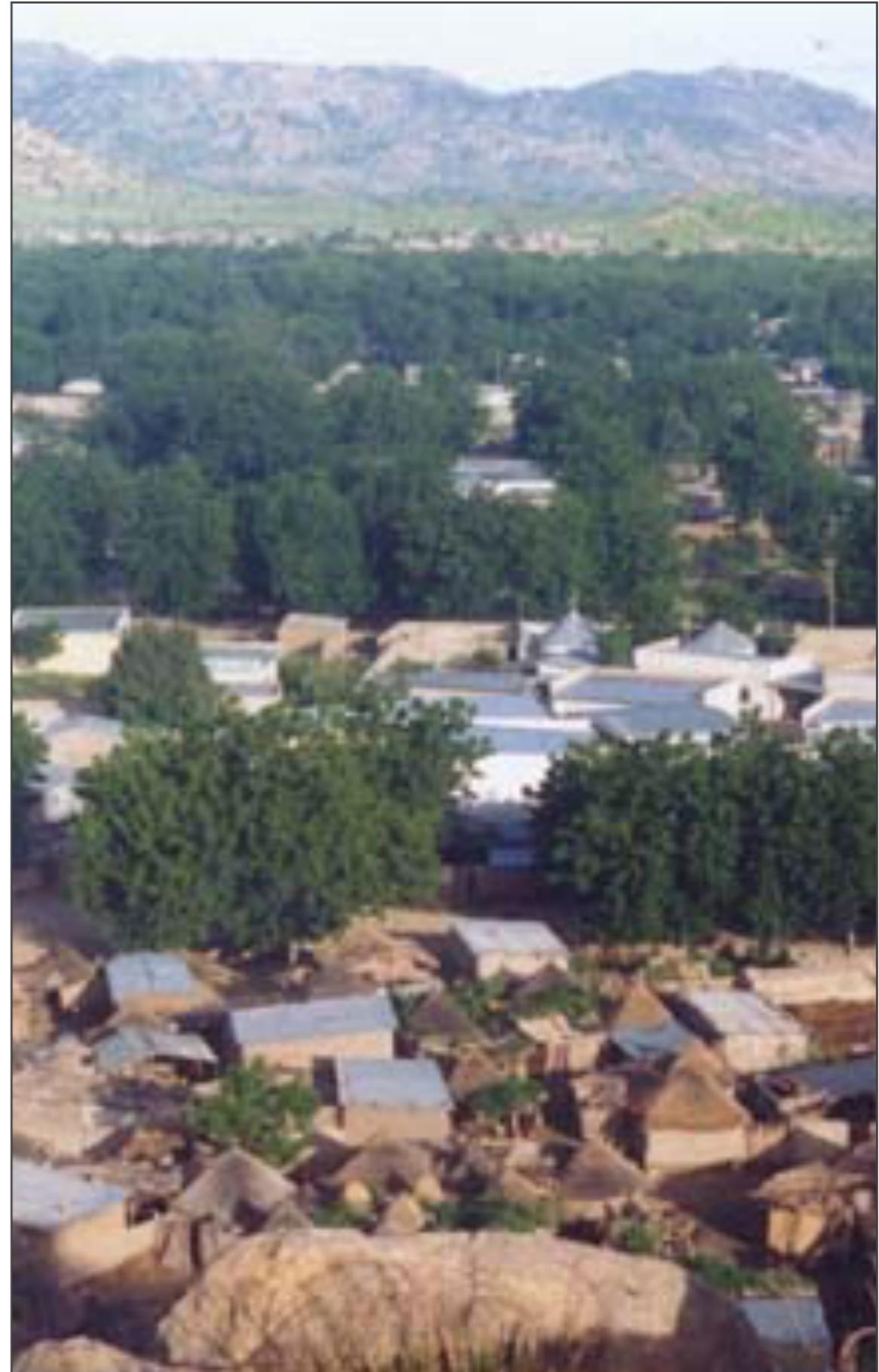
Vertical social mobility
and prestige

Wolff (2016:210)





See Moore (2004)



Town of Mora (taken by Scott MacEachern)

Montagnards and Wandala in Jilve

- Wandala: Socioeconomically dominant, Muslim, primary language is Wandala (Chadic)
- Montagnards: Linguistically heterogenous (various other Chadic languages), maintain traditional religion
- Groups have been in contact for centuries
- Wandala multilingualism reflects polyglossic hierarchy
- Montagnard multilingualism has a different character

	Wandala	French	Arabic	Fulfulde
Self-assessment	Native speaker	Intermediate receptive & productive skills	Decoding skills with limited comprehension	Limited Receptive Skills
Assessment by consultant or researcher	Native speaker	Intermediate receptive & productive skills	Decoding skills with limited comprehension	Declined assessment
Spoken by father	X		X	
Spoken by mother	X			
Spoken by sibling(s)	X	X	X	X
Uses in family	X	X		X
Uses in neighborhood	X			
Native speaker exposure	X			
Uses in religious practice	X		X	
Uses in commerce	X			
Formally instructed		X	X	
Reads regularly		X	X	
Writes regularly		X	X	

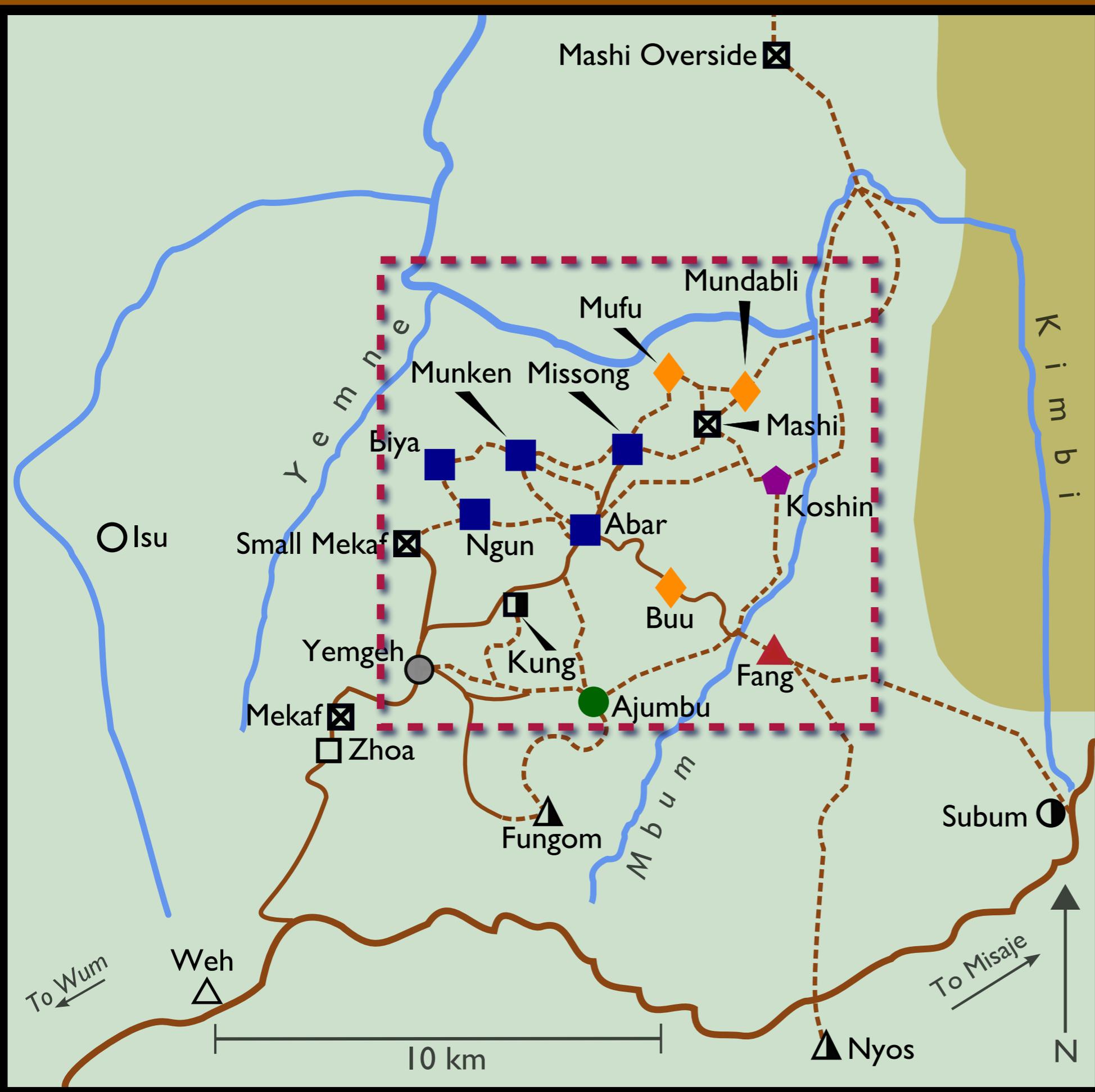
Multilingual profile of a Wandala living in Jilve (Moore 2004:142)

	Wuzlam	Pelasla	Wandala	French	Mada	Fulfulde	English	Zulgwa
Self-assessment	Native speaker	Can pass for native speaker	Highly proficient	Intermediate receptive & productive skills	Intermediate receptive skills	Limited receptive skills	Very limited reading & writing skills	Very limited speaking & listening skills
Assessment by consultant or researcher	Native speaker	Native speaker	Highly proficient non-native	Intermediate receptive & productive skills	Intermediate receptive skills	Limited receptive skills	Very limited reading skills (writing skills not assessed)	No consultant available
Spoken by father	X	X	X			X		
Spoken by mother	X	X	X					
Spoken by sibling(s)	X	X	X					
Uses in family	X	X						
Uses in neighborhood	X							X
Native speaker exposure	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Uses in religious practice	X	X		X	X			
Uses in commerce	X	X	X					
Formally instructed				X			X	
Reads regularly	X			X			X	
Writes regularly				X			X	

Multilingual profile of a Montagnard living in Jilve (Moore 2004:143)

Multilingual cultures

- Wandala grow up in monolingual households and learn second languages in school settings
- Montagnards are often natively bilingual and are taught other languages from a young age
- Montagnard culture is associated with dedicated language learning strategies; children are socialized as multilingual
- The Montagnard pattern appears to be older in this part of the world, with similarities to Lower Fungom



Lower Fungom

- 13 villages
- 7–9 “languages”
- 5 local isolates
- 2 dialect clusters
- 12,000(?) people
- Rural economy
- Localist attitudes
- Multilingualism/
multilectalism
pervasive

Language saves man from drowning!

...a foreigner was drowning in river Mbuk, since he knew that the Mbuks were around, he shouted in the Mbuk language and the Mbuks rushed out and fished him out. Because he identified himself through the canal of language to the Mbuk people he was rescued. It was after the rescue operation that they discovered that it was not a Mbuk, he just used the Mbuk language to call for their attention that one of their sons is drowning in the river.

–Nelson Tsong Tsonghongi

Village

Lexicogrammatical
Code

Ritual
Unit

Chief

Spiritual
Security

Village

Lexicogrammatical
Code

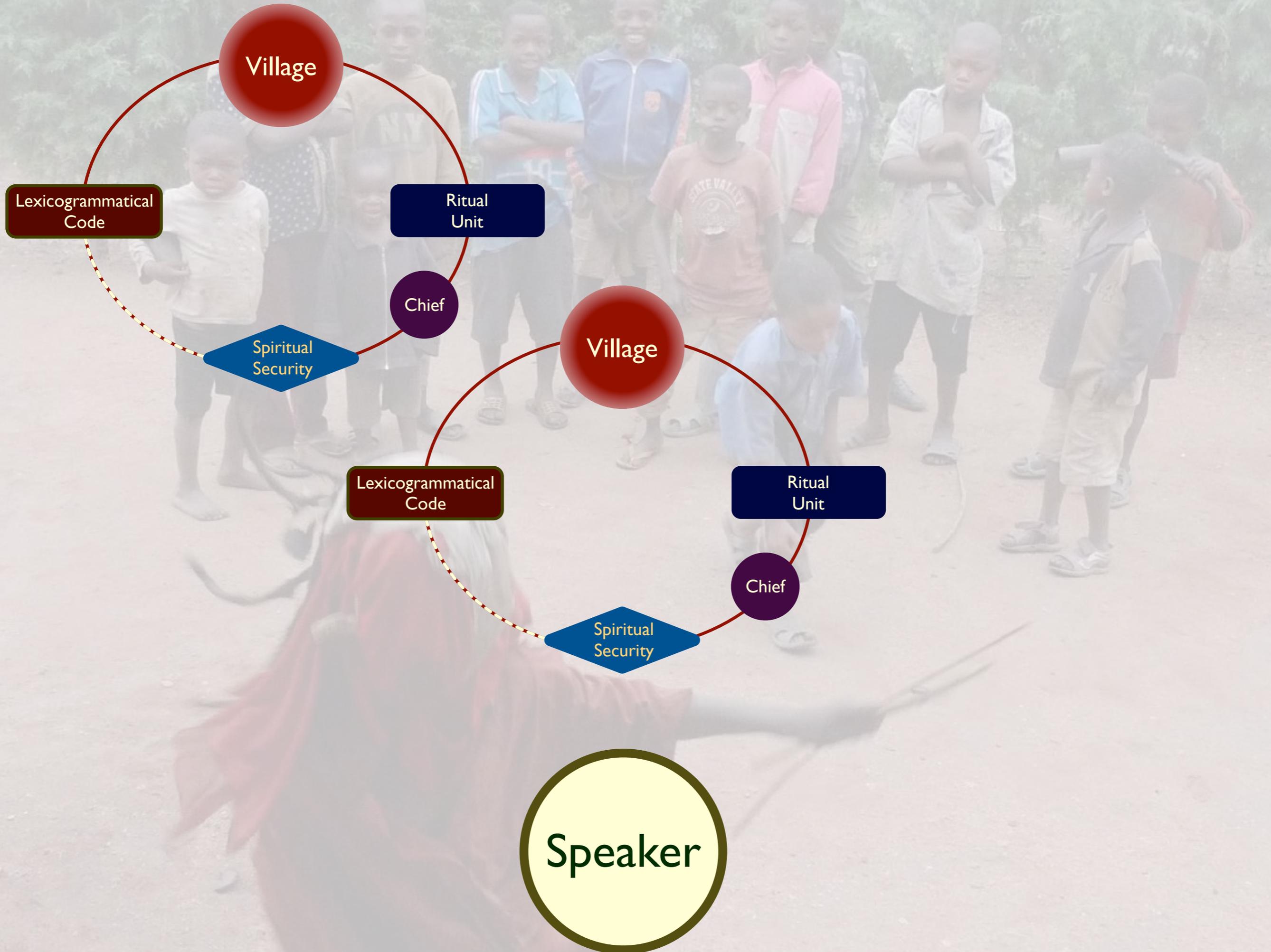
Ritual
Unit

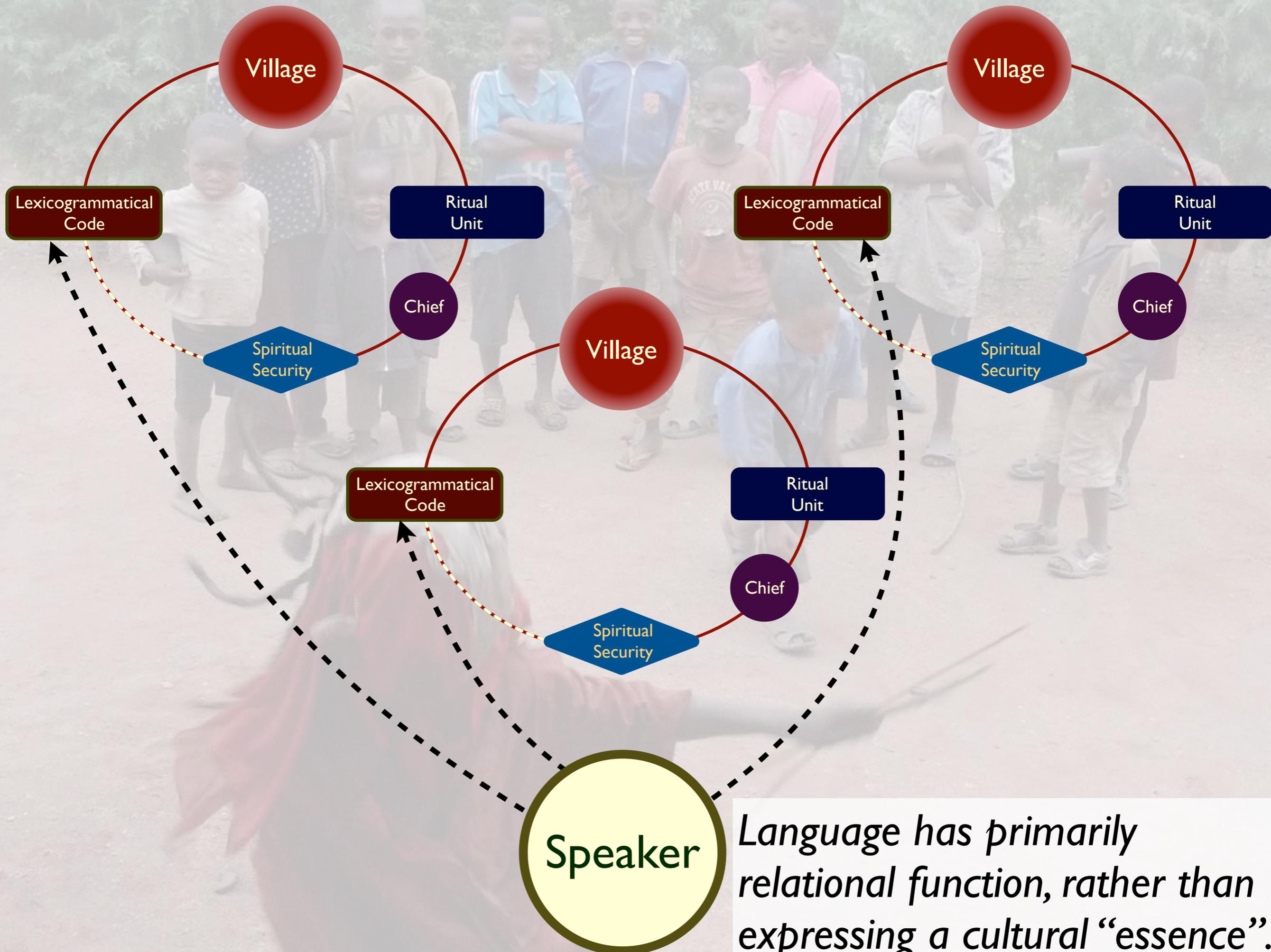
Chief

Spiritual
Security

Speaker







Language has primarily relational function, rather than expressing a cultural “essence”.

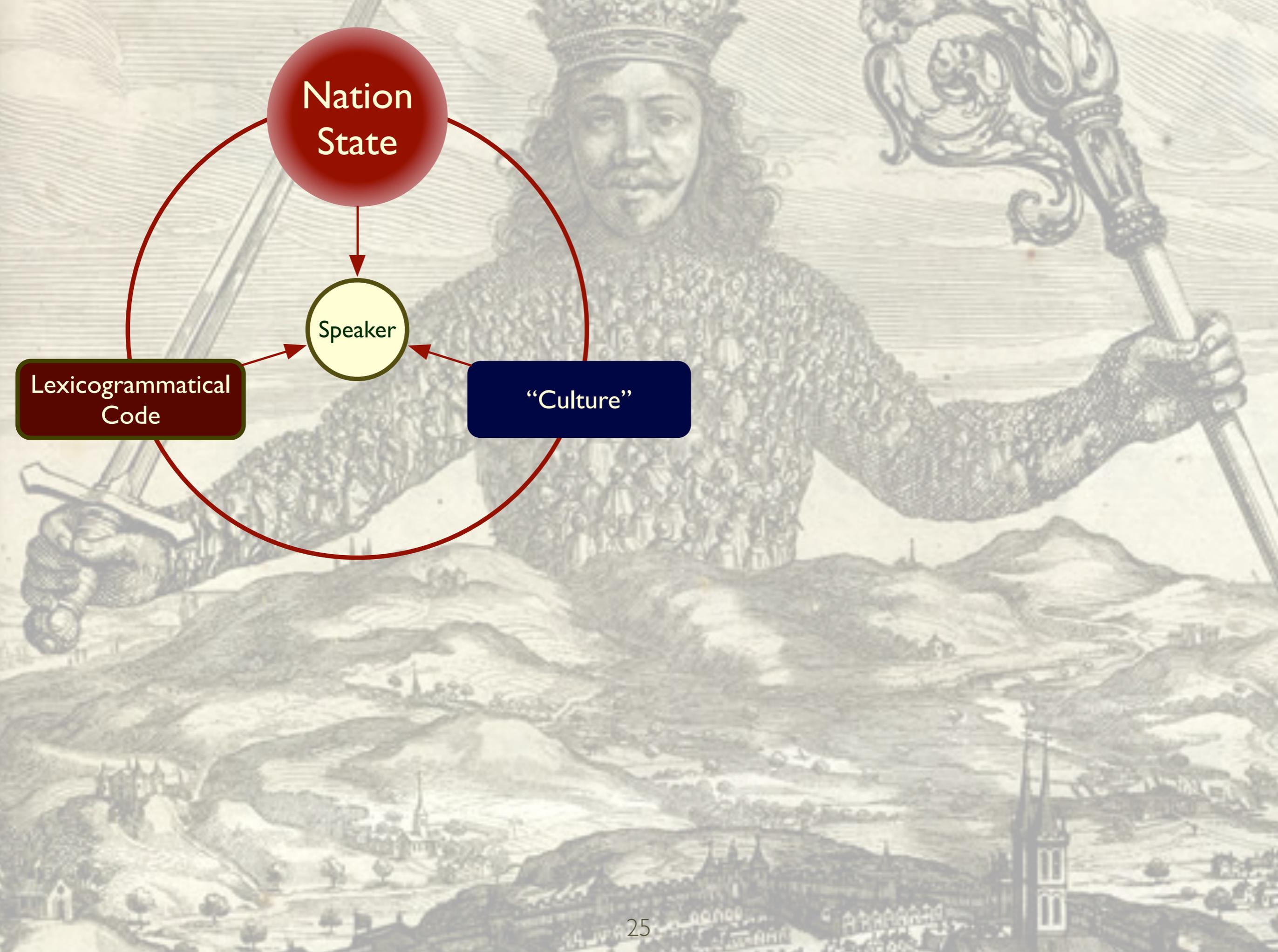
The diagram features a central yellow circle labeled 'Speaker'. Above it is a red circle labeled 'Nation State'. Below the 'Speaker' are two rounded rectangular boxes: a dark red one on the left labeled 'Lexicogrammatical Code' and a dark blue one on the right labeled 'Culture'. A large red circle encloses the 'Nation State', 'Speaker', and 'Culture' elements. Arrows point from 'Nation State' down to 'Speaker', from 'Lexicogrammatical Code' up to 'Speaker', and from 'Culture' up to 'Speaker'. The background is a faded historical illustration of a figure holding a sword and a scepter over a landscape.

Nation
State

Speaker

Lexicogrammatical
Code

“Culture”

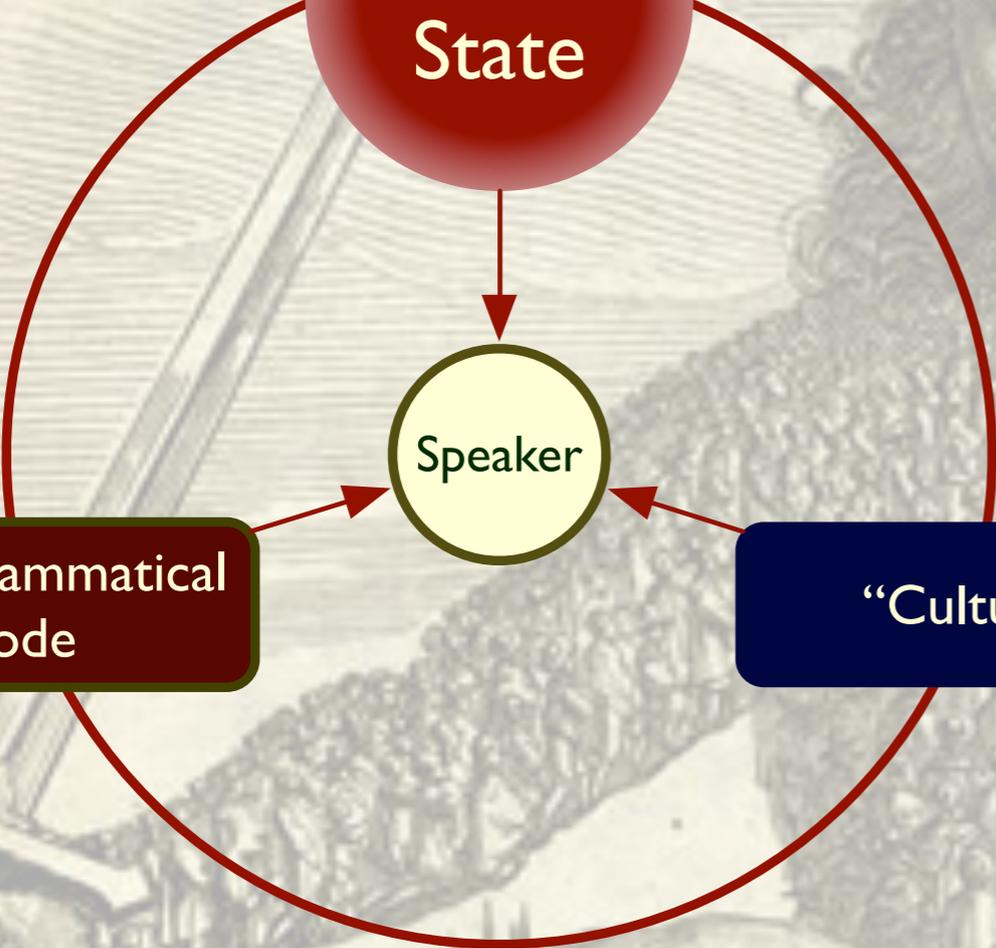


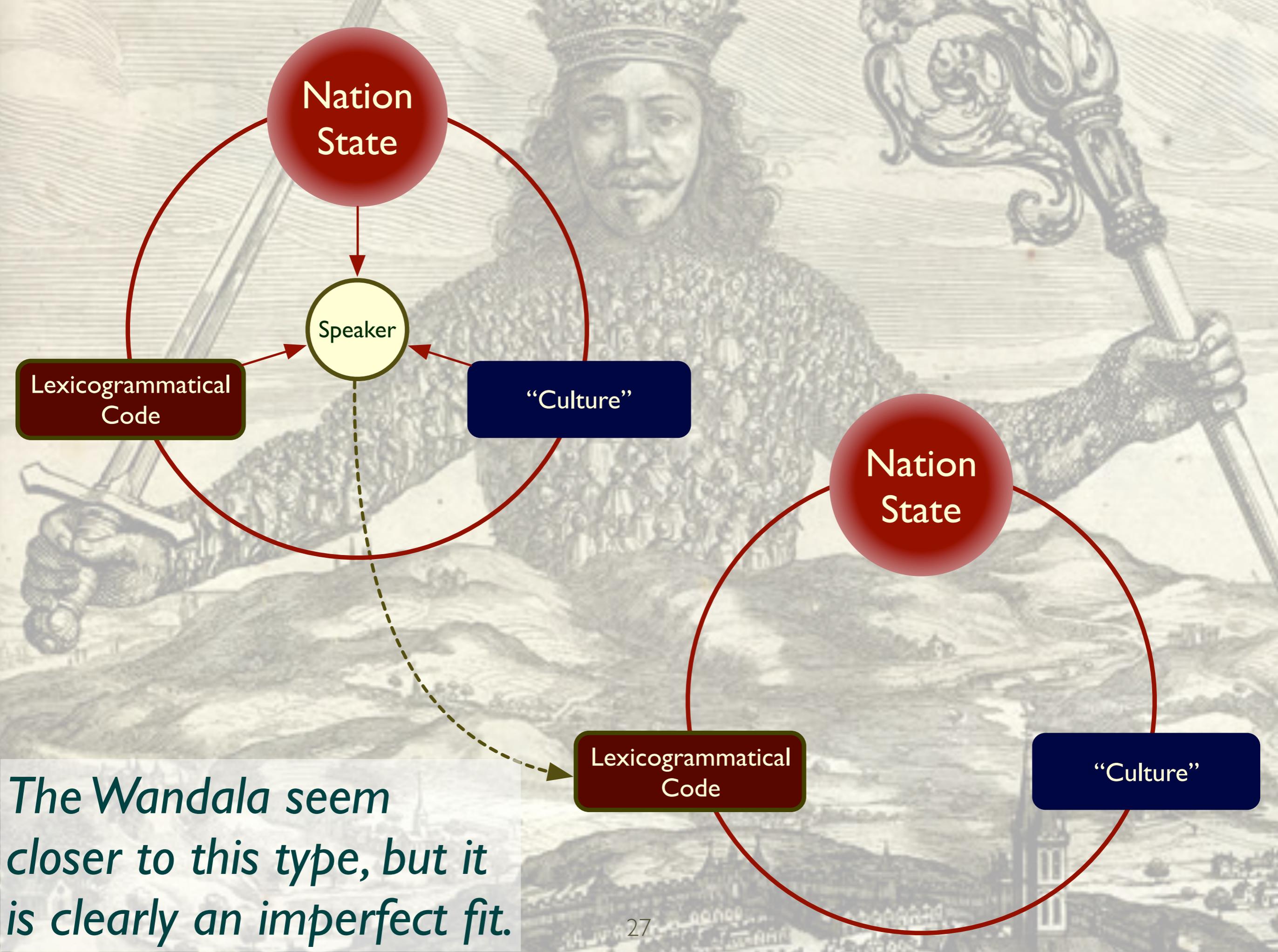
Nation
State

Speaker

Lexicogrammatical
Code

“Culture”





Nation State

Speaker

Lexicogrammatical Code

“Culture”

Nation State

Lexicogrammatical Code

“Culture”

The Wandala seem closer to this type, but it is clearly an imperfect fit.

Parameters of multilingualism

- What kinds of social units are lexico-grammatical codes associated with, both observationally and ideologically?
- What kinds of identities are indexed through the choice of using a particular language?
- What motivates an individual to acquire a set of languages?
- How are multiple languages deployed in language use?
- How do different cultures of multilingualism affect patterns of metalinguistic awareness and language change?
- ...

Documenting multilingualism in Lower Fungom



Components of the documentation

- Standard descriptive and documentary techniques aimed at uncovering properties of lexico-grammatical codes
- Comparative work across varieties
- Ethnographically informed sociolinguistic surveys
- Assessment of multilingual competences
- Tracking of language use across the day
- Spatial and social network analysis
- ...

Questionnaire excerpt

Paternal name

Maternal name

Other names

Paternal affiliation

Maternal affiliation

Spouse's provenance

Spouse's languages

Father's provenance

Father's languages

Mother's provenance

Mothers's languages

Children's languages

Language name

Degree of competence

*1=hears a bit; 2=hears but no talk;
3=talks a bit, 4=fluent; 5=native*

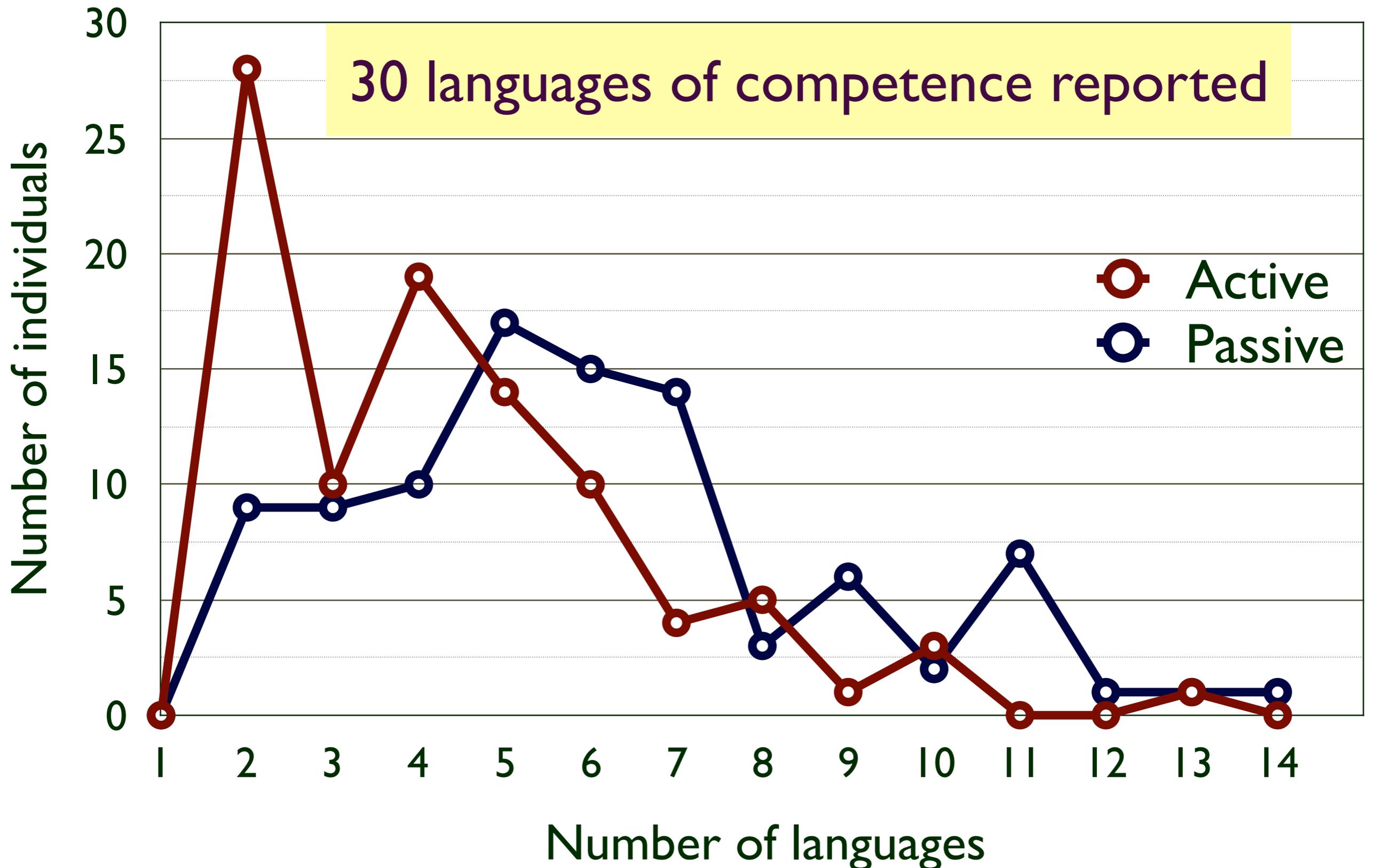
Where did you learn it?

Where do you use it?

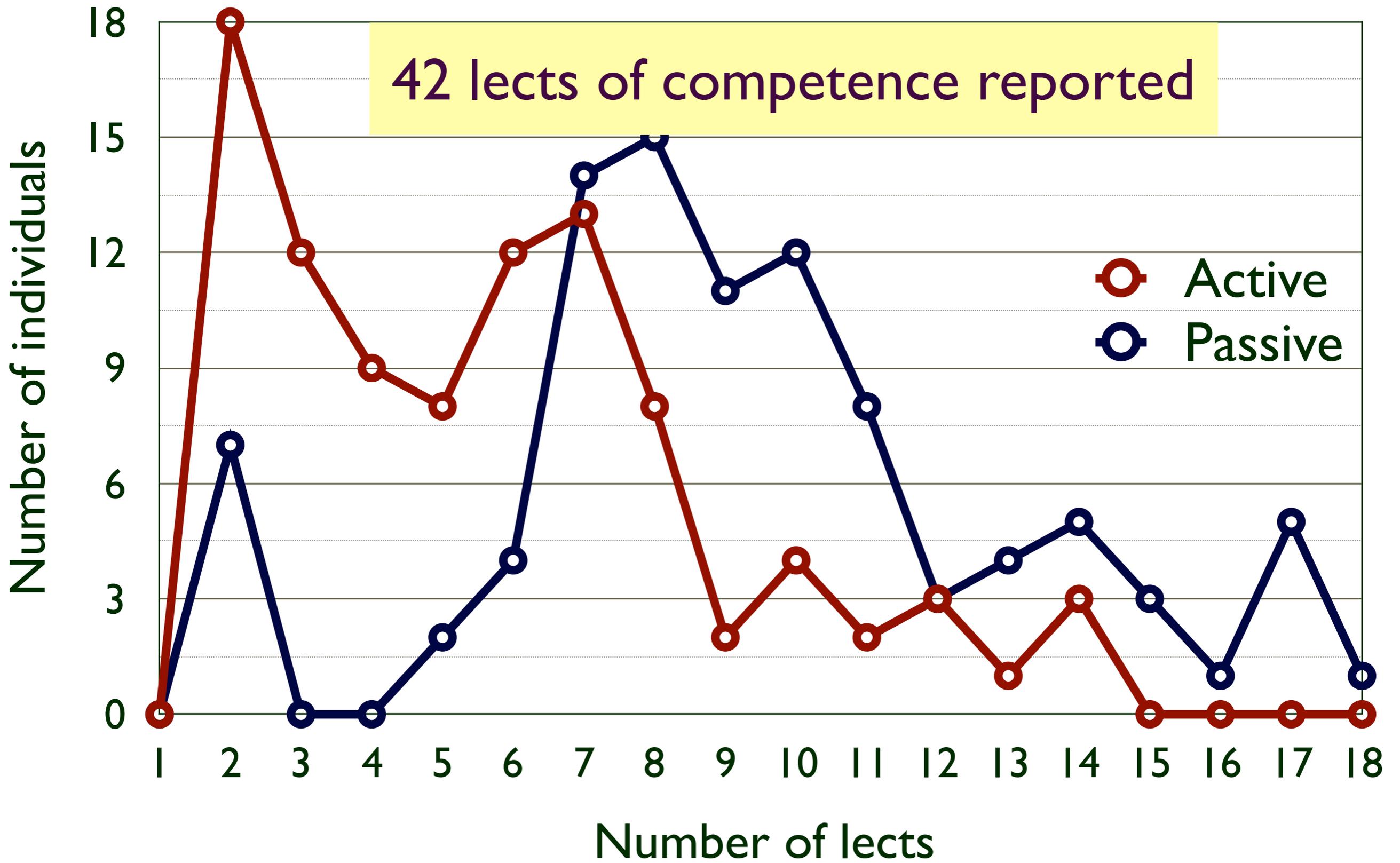
What are the advantages of knowing this language?

Are there special occasions in which you use it (e.g. prayers, songs, etc.)?

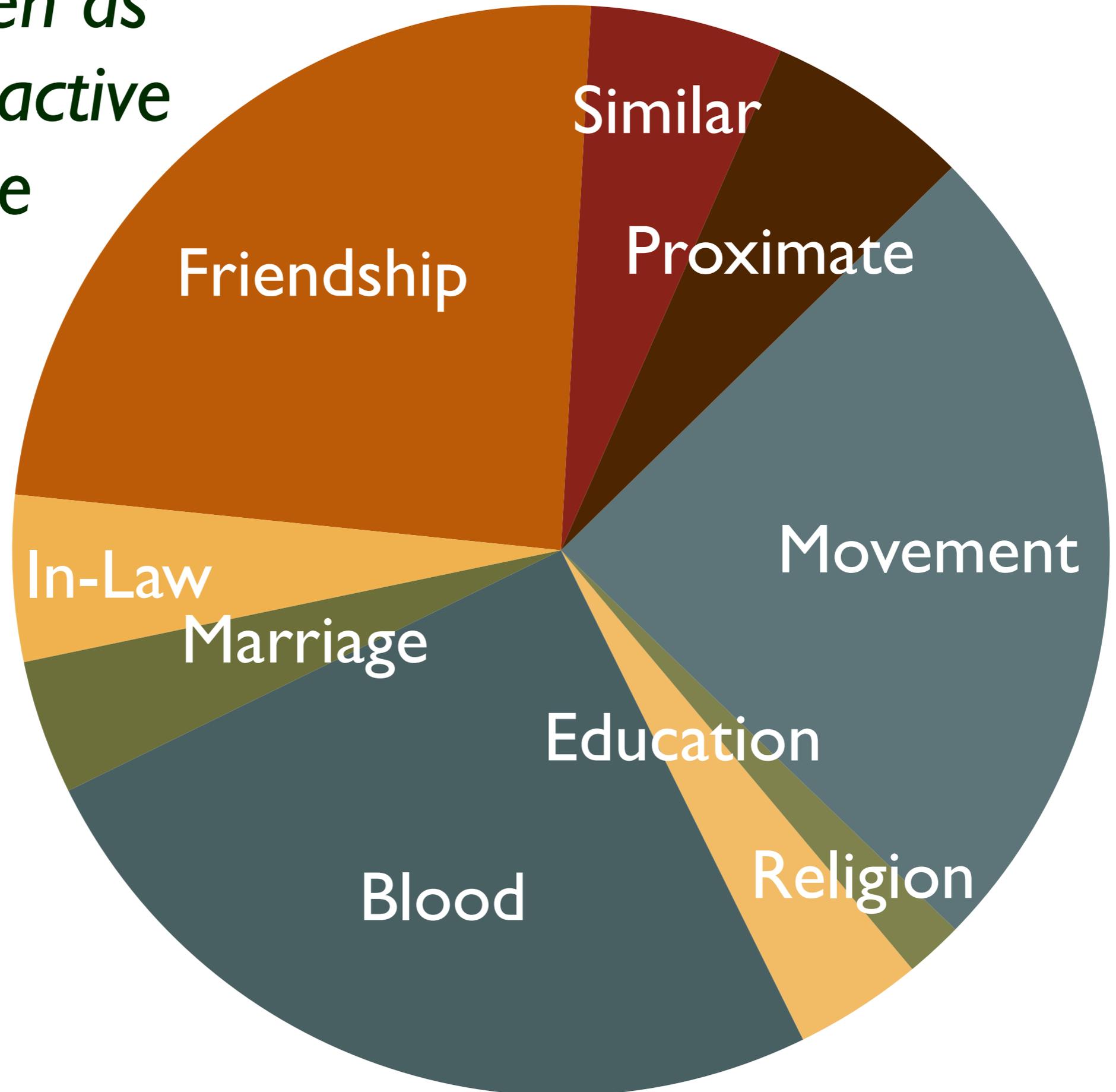
Reported number of languages spoken



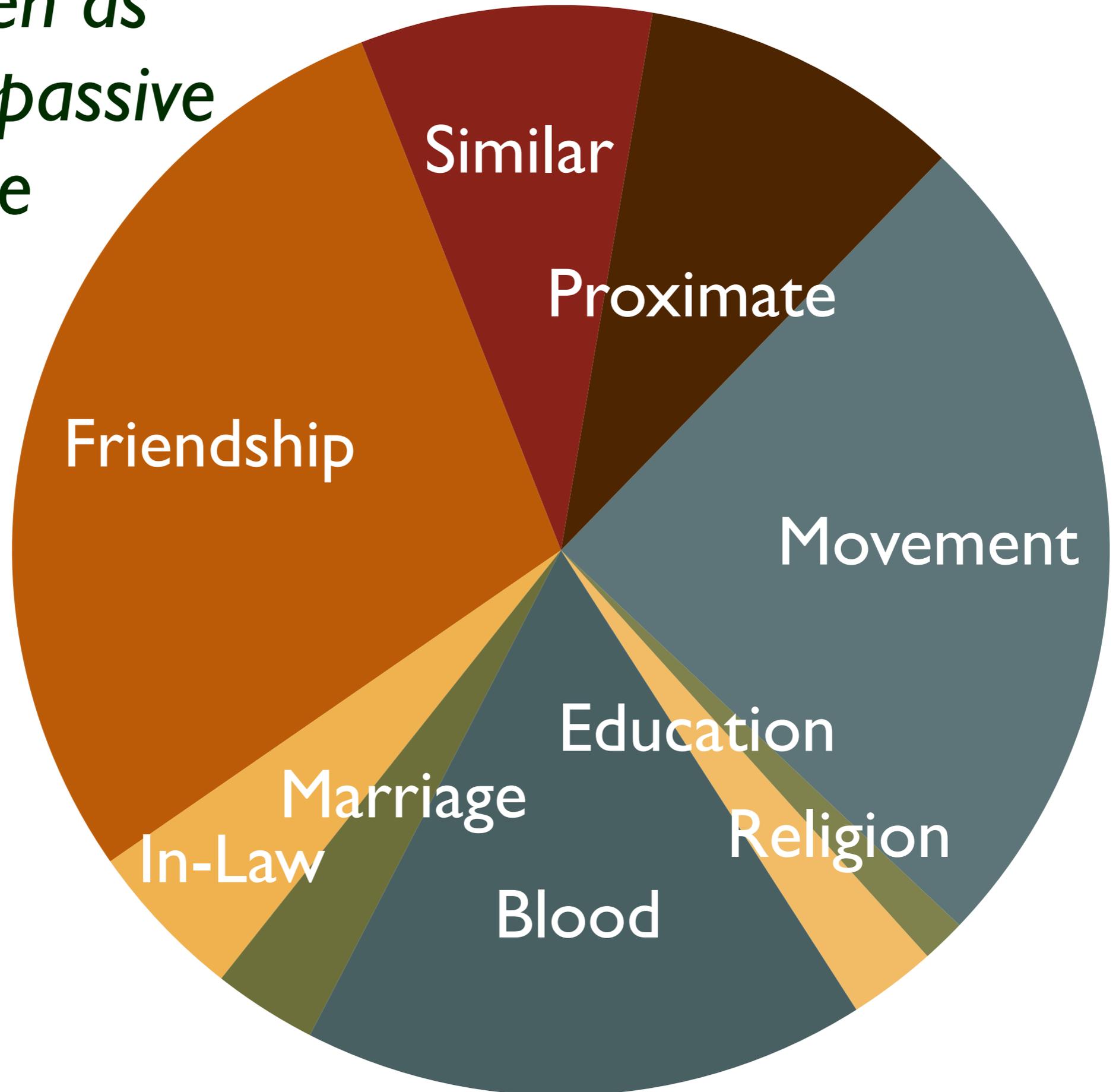
Reported number of lects spoken



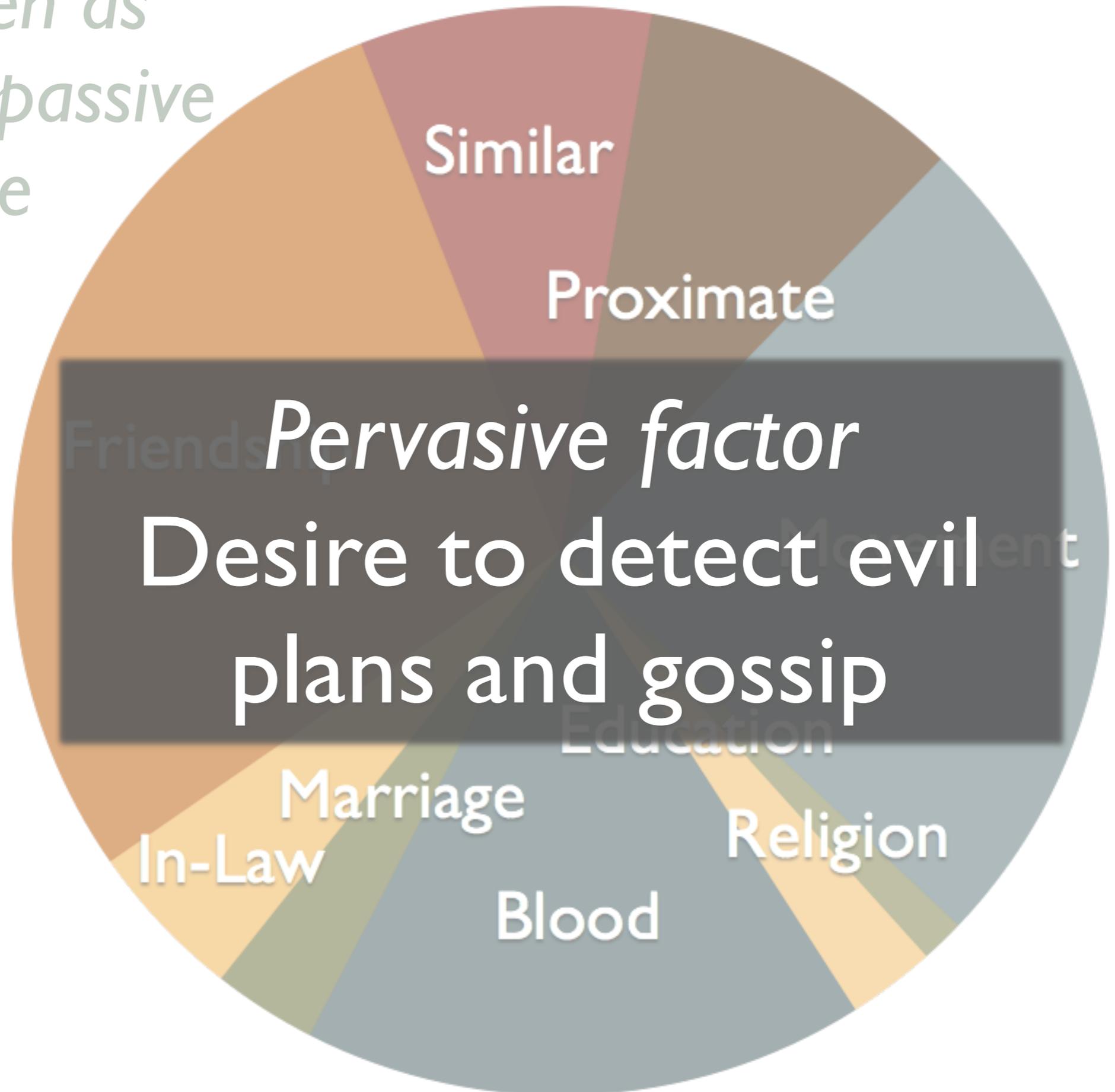
Factors given as promoting active competence

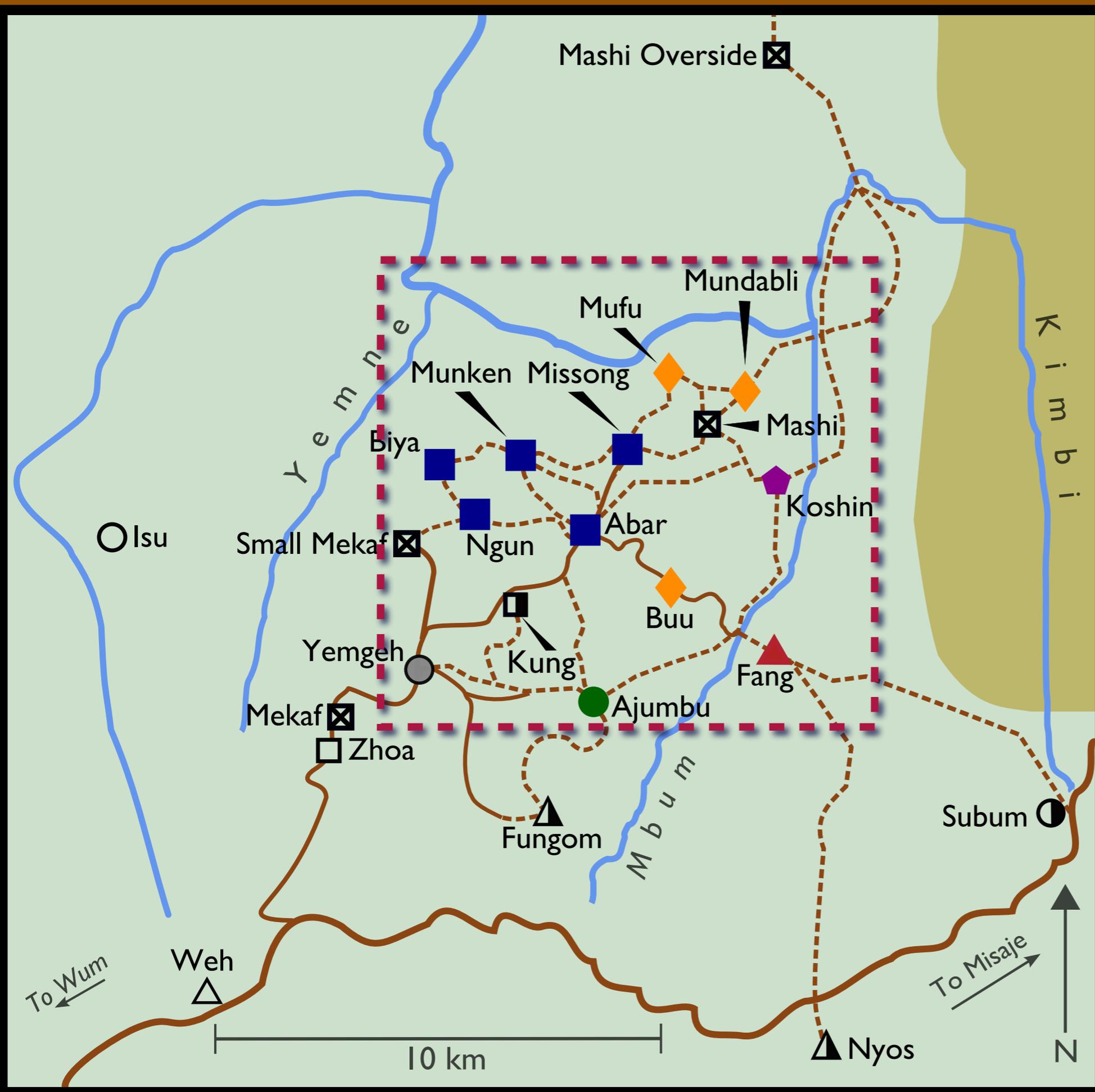


Factors given as promoting passive competence



Factors given as promoting passive competence





Lower Fungom

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multilectalism
pervasive

Nto Cho Boniface's linguistic day

- Son of the Fon of Missong, but not heir apparent; mother is from Buu
- Hunter and farmer, living in Missong; formerly worked on plantations outside of Lower Fungom
- Speaks Missong, Mashi, Buu, Munken, Mundabli, Mufu, and Cameroonian Pidgin as a “native speaker”; fluent in Menkaf and English; speaks Abar a bit, understands some French
- Mixes a lot of Cameroonian Pidgin with his Missong

Boniface's language choice

Boniface kept using Missong until he met Frederick from Mashi. Both men started using Missong but Boniface switched to Mashi to discuss something he did not want others to understand. He was asking Frederick how hunting was in his village, then he (Boniface) switched back to Missong. He kept using Missong but switched again to Abar when Juma Richard from Abar spoke to him in Abar. Boniface responded in Abar but as he remembered that Richard could understand Missong, he switched back to Missong and kept using it with Richard...They were later joined by Ayaba...Ayaba even uses some CPE. Boniface says it is because they were discussing a general topic. He also explained that in LF using CPE can be taken badly as CPE is mostly used by people who have been out of LF; it has some kind of prestige. Using CPE could mean that you want to make the conversation heard by everybody.

B: *Nde...a ye ne...be de be?*

Uncle...How are you? Isn't there kola?

N: *Nfo **question** wa tumε.*

You had asked me before.

B: *A fe ηkwo mi tumε be?*

What is it about?

A fe so henε. N du we kwe fa mi εmu be...

You remembered. I asked you to buy Kola for me...

[noise]

B: *Ai ca n se keke wu!*

Ah! Don't flatter me!

N: *A ke ya le dzeη?*

Did you come up to Fang?

Ɖ wu ye bu ka follow wa ton.

I heard that you were chased there.

B: *Ɖ ka follow be mi?*

Chased away?

Ɖge du ye a ka de mi. E be kehe Manto.

It was not me, it was Manto

N: *A ke wou ye kem jo uwa de?*

Are you all listening to what I am saying?

B: *Ben wou gin ta?*

What should we listen to?

N: *A ge ke ke ta?*

So, where did you go?

B: *Offlicense* **wo ne mi wo me ma bahε ti ma.**

I reached here and saw you in this off license.

N: *Bi kie lahε.*

You are still a child.

[After some grumbling, N stops speaking to B, who then leaves.]

Language as relational index

- Boniface's mother is from Buu, as is the senior man
- The senior man is married to Boniface's older sister
- In Buu, Boniface is clearly junior to the senior man
- In Misson, Boniface is the son of the chief, and the senior man from Buu has no specific seniority relationship to him

A linguistic gap: No code mixing

- This work has found individuals who can fluidly move between codes as social situations warrant
- But, significant “mixing” has not been found—speakers report speaking one language at a time
- The one exception: Cameroonian Pidgin, which is valued very differently from the local languages
- There is, however, diachronic evidence for mixing
- Mixing is reported in Senegal (Cobbinah et al. 2017) and among the Mandara montagnards (Moore 2004)

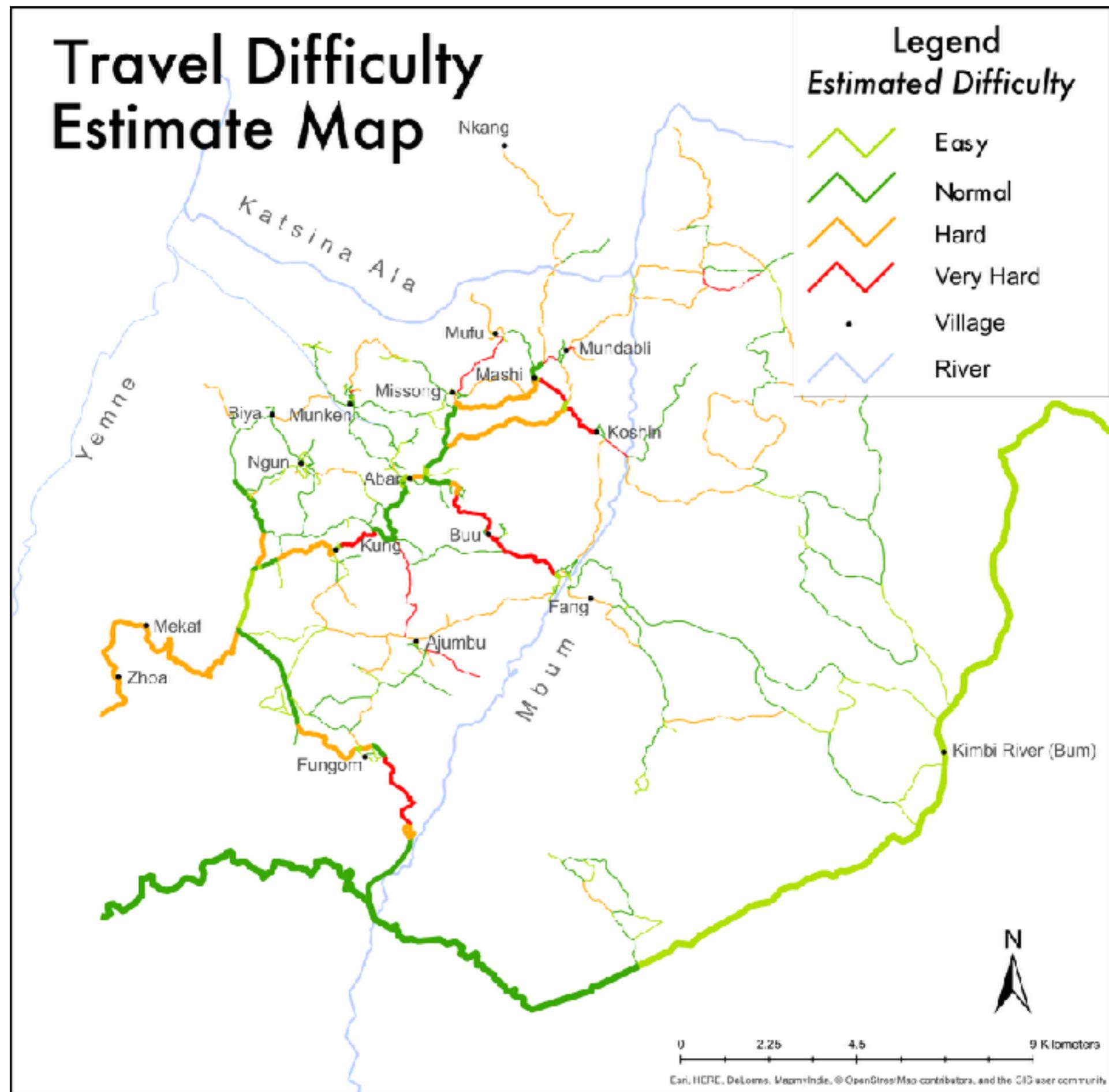
Explaining individual repertoires

- The model we are working with views linguistic knowledge as emanating from individual-specific constraints
- Testing this requires exploring how different factors correlate with individual repertoires
- We have begun to explore this by looking at social and spatial networks (Di Carlo et al. 2018)

Travel Difficulty Estimate Map

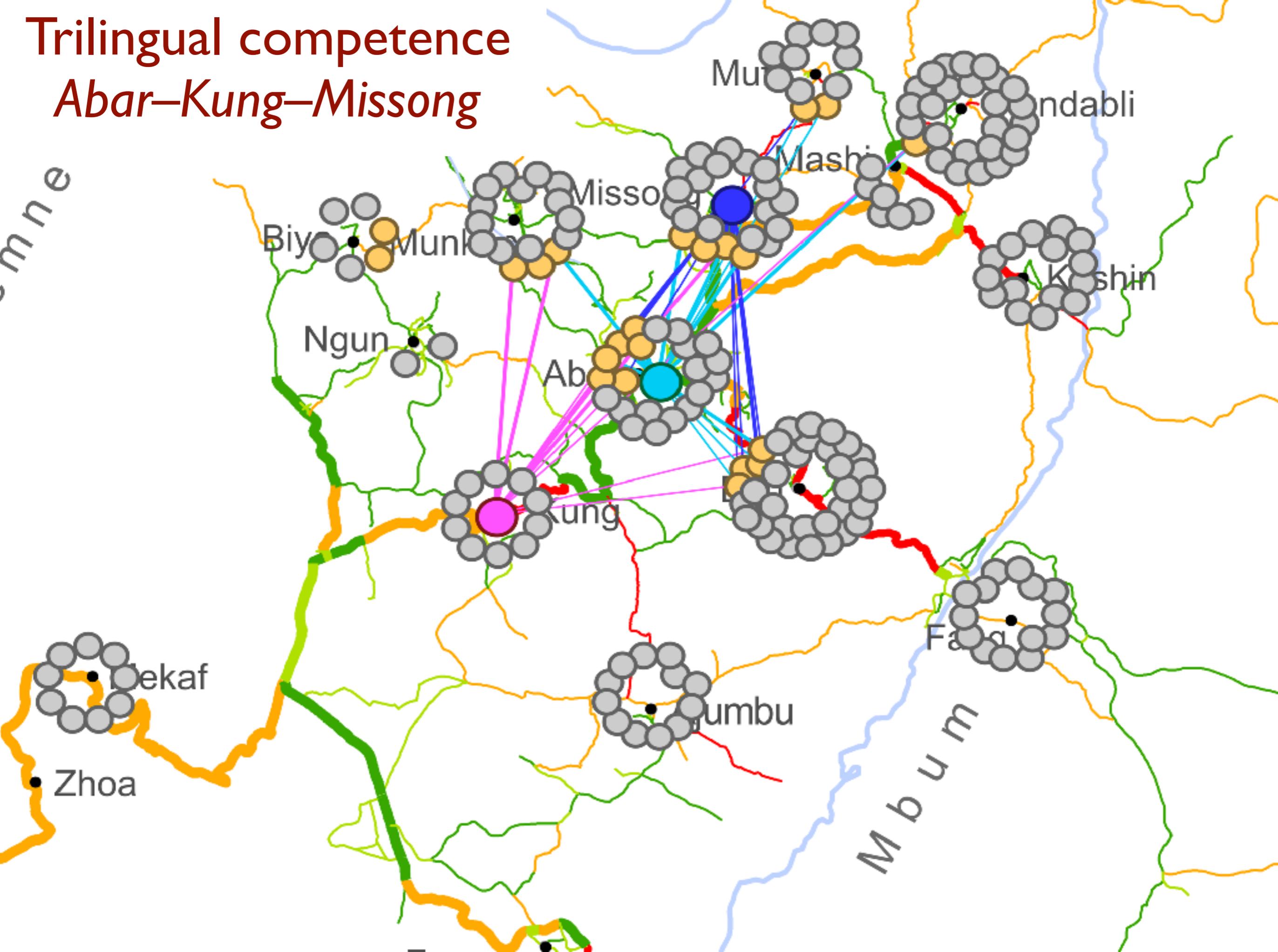
Legend
Estimated Difficulty

-  Easy
-  Normal
-  Hard
-  Very Hard
-  Village
-  River

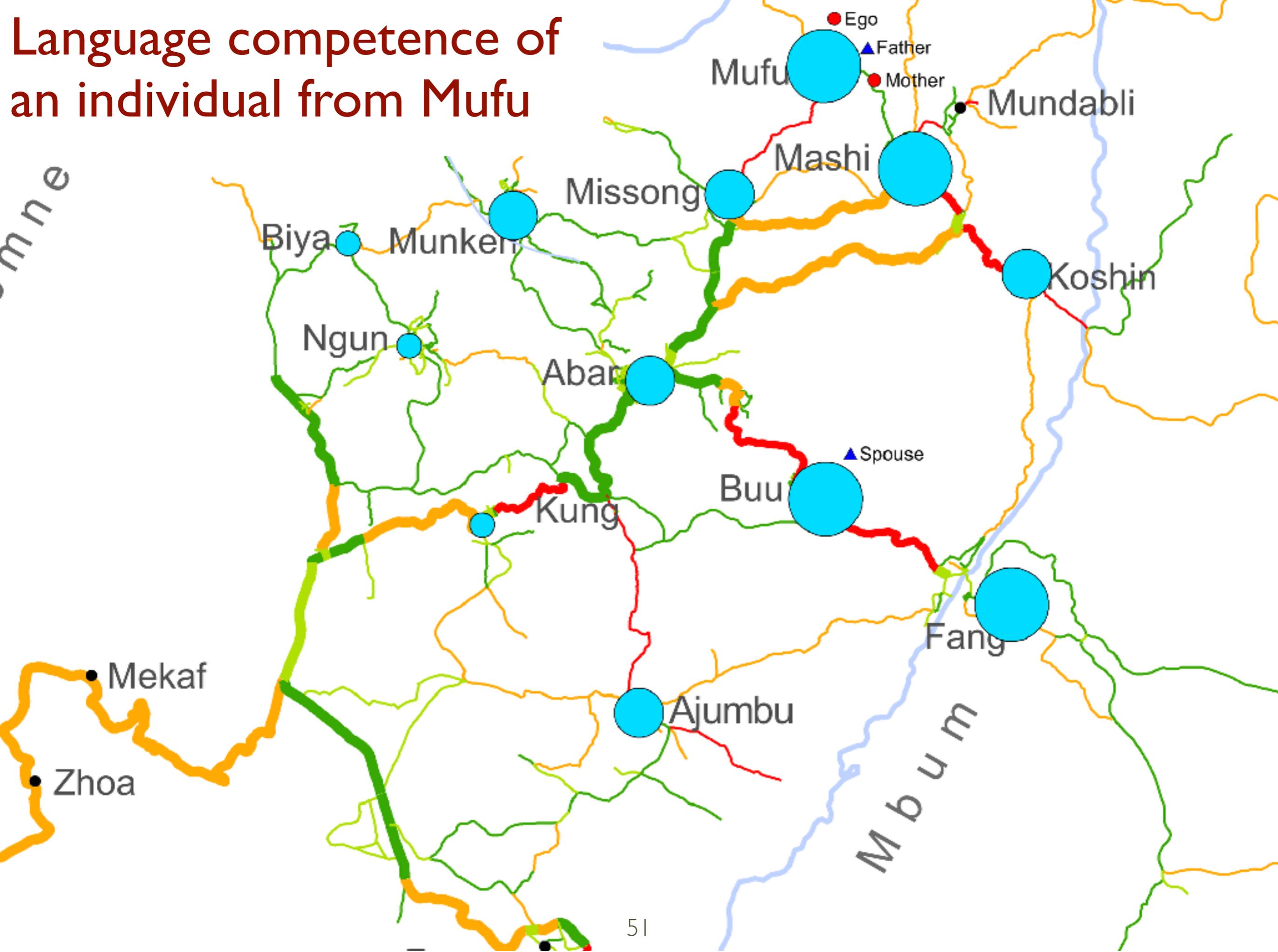




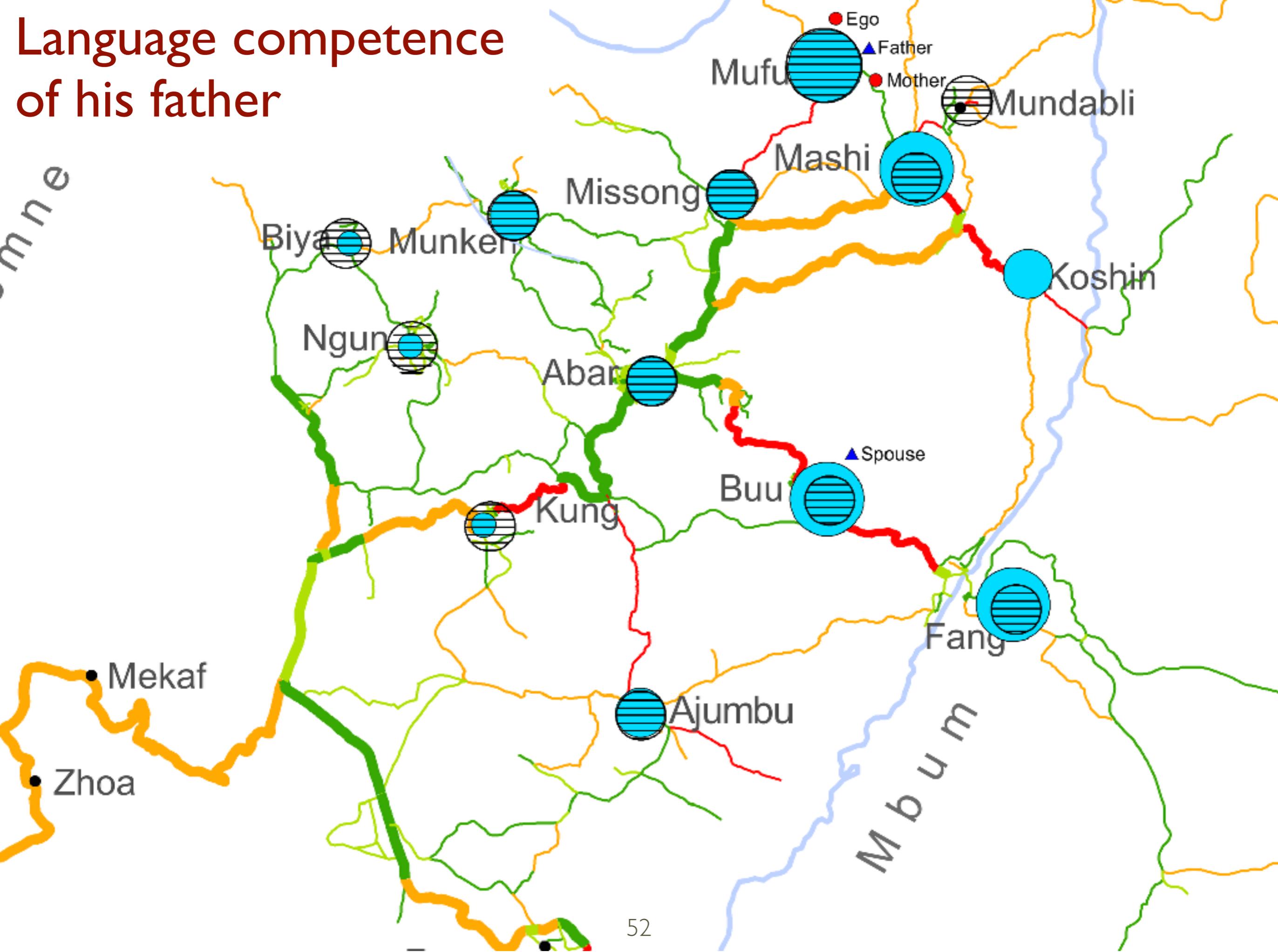
Trilingual competence *Abar–Kung–Missong*



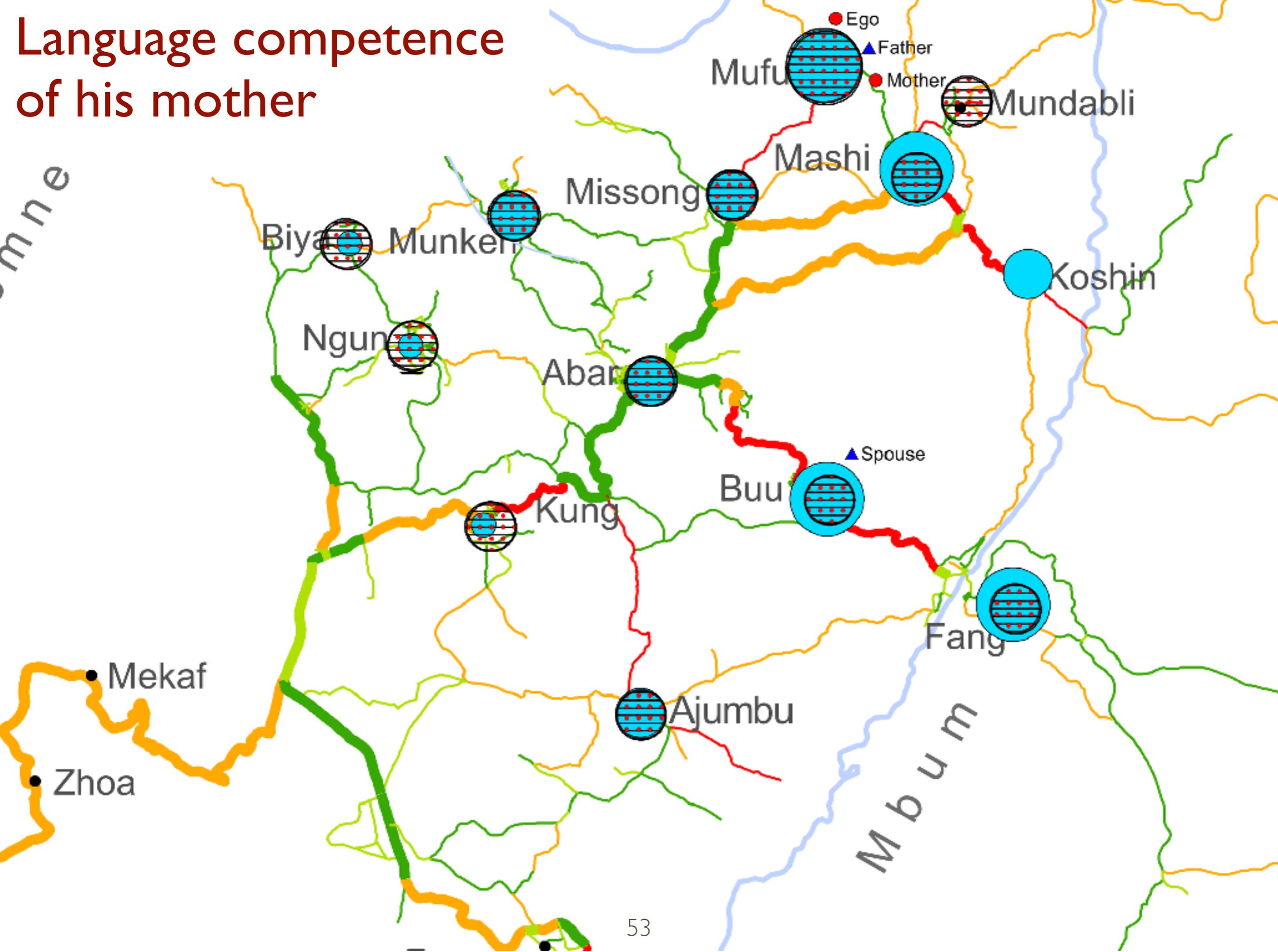
Language competence of an individual from Mufu



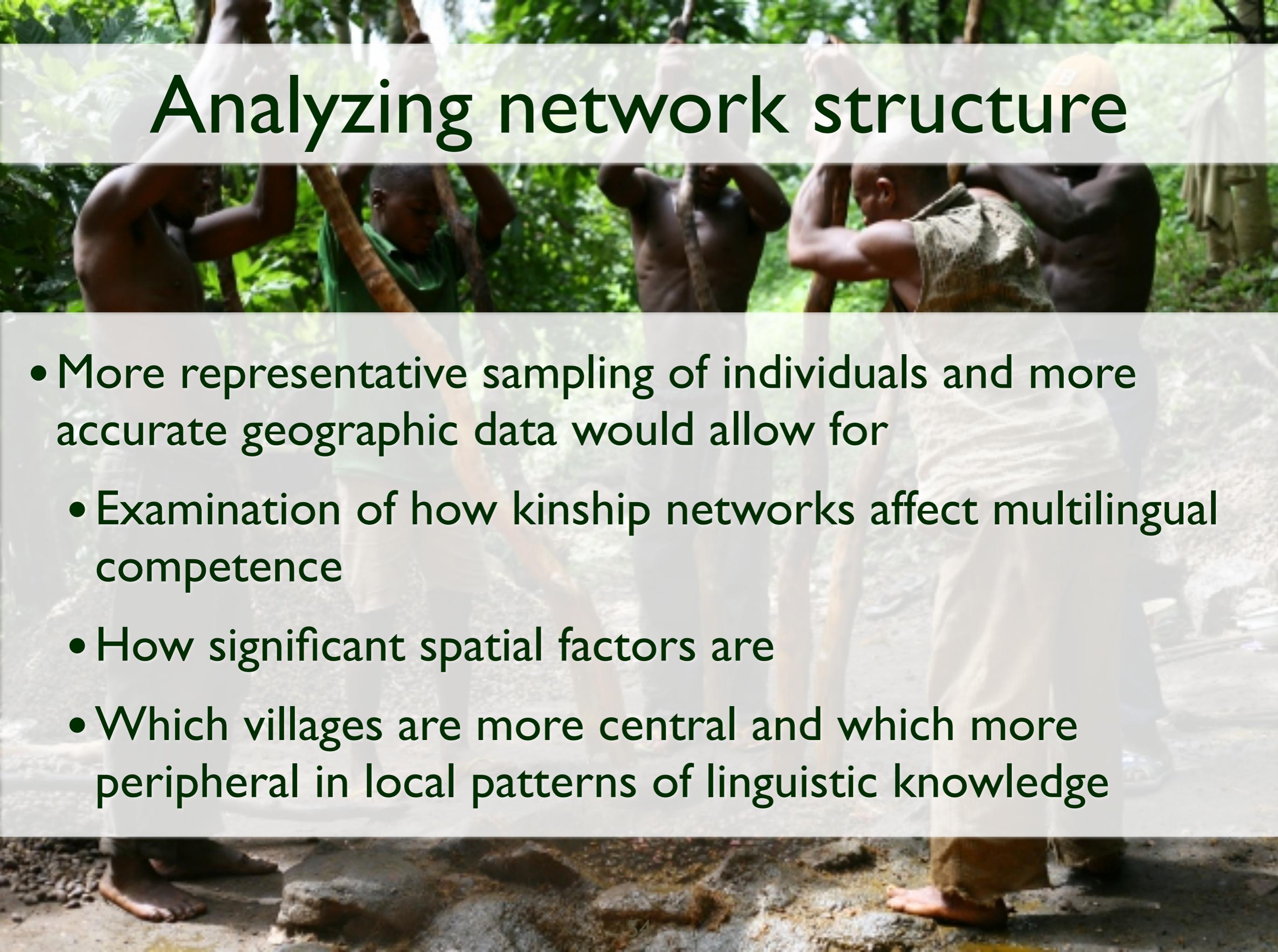
Language competence of his father



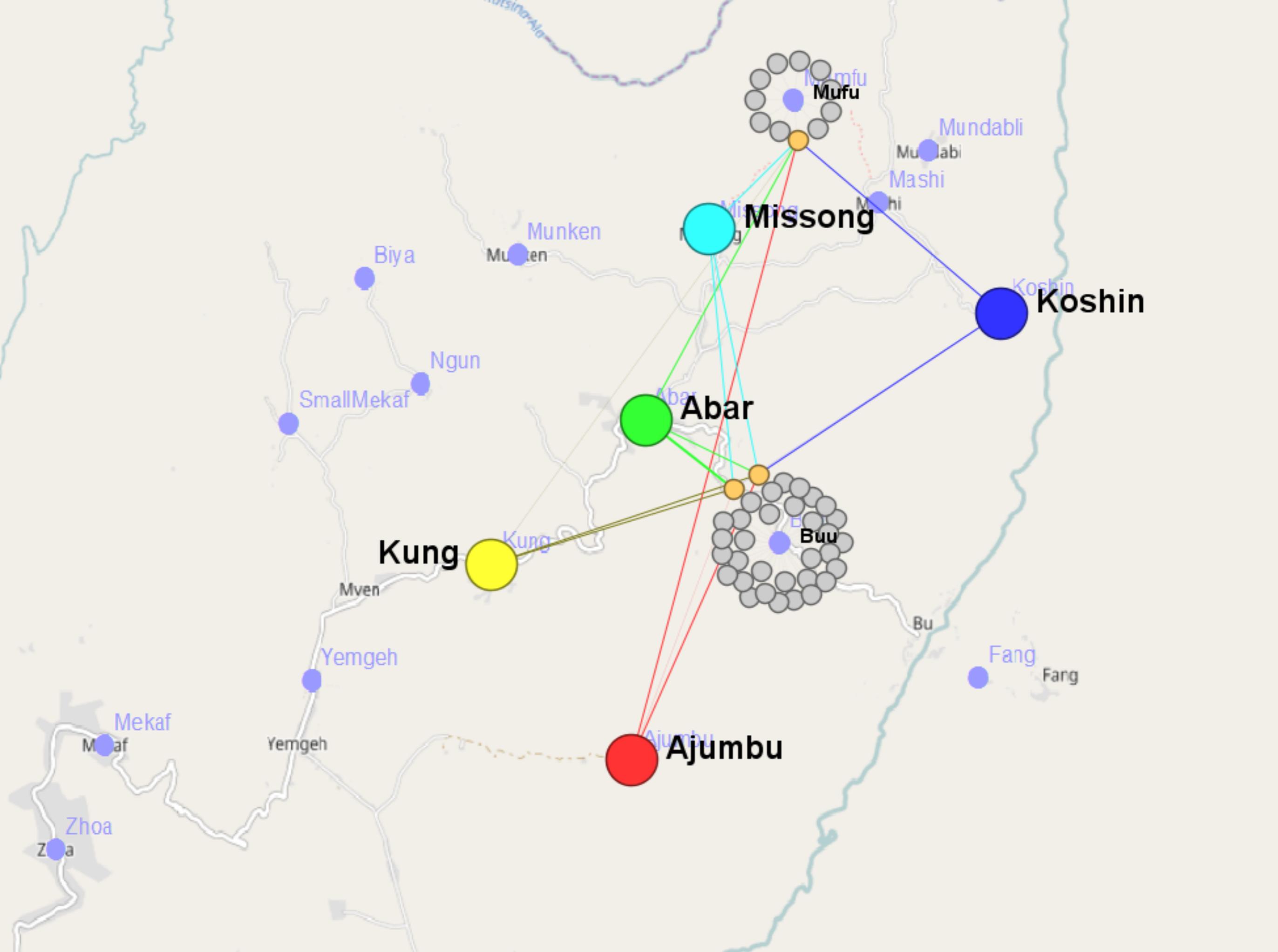
Language competence of his mother



Analyzing network structure



- More representative sampling of individuals and more accurate geographic data would allow for
 - Examination of how kinship networks affect multilingual competence
 - How significant spatial factors are
 - Which villages are more central and which more peripheral in local patterns of linguistic knowledge



Multilingualism in Lower Fungom

- What kind of social unit: The village
- What kind of identities: Membership in a social network
- What motivates multilingualism: Access to resources
- How are languages deployed: Discretely, without mixing
- Change: Abrupt code creation (Di Carlo & Good 2014)?
- Metalinguistic awareness: Not yet researched

Broader linguistic applications



Significance of multilingual research

- 
- A photograph of an elderly woman with a yellow and blue headwrap, wearing a white t-shirt, speaking to a young child in a purple shirt. They are in front of a mud-brick wall. The woman's mouth is open as if she is speaking or singing. The child is looking towards the woman. The background is a textured, reddish-brown wall.
- Development of documentary records that are more responsive to actual practices of speaker communities
 - Models of change grounded in local language dynamics
 - Understanding how individuals in cultures built around multilingualism show different kinds of linguistic knowledge

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Project publications: <http://buffalo.edu/~jcgood/lowerfungom.html>

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