



Some Peculiarities of Hybrid Language "Camfranglais"

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the peculiarities of hybrid language code called "Camfranglais"(CFA), which emerged in large cities as a youth social code and now is rather popular and widely used in Cameroon. The researchers have described and analyzed the causes of CFA occurrence and its social functions in the modern Cameroonian society. The existing terms describing CFA have been analyzed. The authors have studied the morpho-syntactic structures of CFA and the basis of CFA dictionary. The main sources of CFA replenishment and semantic processes that accompany the process of borrowing from other languages have also been defined and considered.

Keywords: *Camfranglais, hybrid language, French, English, Pidgin-English, Cameroonian languages, borrowing.*

1. Introduction

Our objectives are to acquaint the reader with the history of emergence of a new linguistic code named "Camfranglais" (CFA) and its functions in the society. The authors set the purpose to analyze the existing terms denominating it, to identify the basic structures of which CFA consists, to analyze the basis of its dictionary, to determine the main sources of its replenishment and semantic processes that accompany the process of borrowing from other languages.

2. Research methods

Methods of the analysis are defined by the objectives, theoretical and practical orientation of the research, and the character of the presented material. In the paper the authors implied various types of analysis: the intralinguistic, geolinguistic, functional and interdisciplinary analysis. Linguistic and non-linguistic information is taken into account for this study.

3. Result and discussion

According to Biloa [2], CFA represents "a fast-growing special subcode used for communication by Cameroon's urban youth, more specifically for such categories as merchants, unemployed people, pupils and students." The syntactic structure of CFA is calqued on French syntax. Inside the sentence, some words are replaced by either English words that may be conjugated as in French, or by words borrowed from one of the indigenous languages or Pidgin English. CFA first appeared in the mid-1970s, following the unification of French-speaking Cameroons and English-speaking southern Cameroons. It has been documented since 1970, but scientists began to study it since 1980 [8].

Tiayon-Lekobou [20] claims that CFA has originated from an initial criminal argot in Douala (the economic capital of Cameroon). Lobé-Ewane [15] ascribes its creation to students at

the University of Yaoundé. This "sociolect" was invented as a result of the imposition of bilingual curricula on the students by the state. Bilingual education policy compelled them to take courses in a language in which they were not proficient: French for Anglophone students and English for Francophone students. Students wanted a model of communication that would distinguish them from other segments of the population. Thus, CFA started as a joke, but now it is widespread and deep-rooted [21]. It serves its speakers as an icon of "resistance identity" i.e. "they consciously create and constantly transform this sociolect of theirs by manipulating lexical items from various Cameroonian and European sources, in an effort to mark off their identity as a new social group, the modern Cameroonian urban youth, in opposition to established groups such as the older generation, the rural population and the Cameroonian elites who have subscribed to the norms of "la francophonie" [14]. From the functional point of view, it is used as a jargon and has clear social functions. It signals rebellion against authority and societal expectations.

The term "Camfranglais" is derived from the words "Cameroon", "French" and "English". It should be emphasized that the term has not been established yet and is not the only one. To refer to the social code many other names are used: "Francanglais", "Cam-Anglais", "Francamanglais", "Fran-Anglais" and "Francam". CFA is actively spreading in Cameroon. Now it ceases to be the language of the young generation, because it is also in demand among adults. In other words, the fact that CFA has emerged as a youth sociolect does not mean that it cannot serve the older generation.

Despite many attempts to classify this subcode (jargon, Argo, pigeon, Sabir, and even code switching), it is difficult to determine whether the Argo variety is used as a French subcode (which is used in a particular communicative situation and on a specific topic) or a new independent language resulting from the interaction of languages in Cameroon.

However, the part of the term "Anglais", which is present in terms of "Camfranglais" or "Canfranglais", has connotations that are subsequently felt not only by the speakers themselves, but also by those who observe them, including linguists.

The presence of the term “English” creates the risk that the direct influence of English (not only as the second official language of Cameroon, but also the language of globalization) may be overstated in the use by the youth and thus the role of pidgin English as a donor vocabulary of English origin will be underestimated. In fact, a significant part of the vocabulary of pidgin-English is of English origin and it is spoken not only throughout the English-speaking part of Cameroon, but also in some parts of French-speaking regions (region bamileke), Douala, and even, to some extent in Yaounde, which is located outside Pidgin-English speaking zone So, among the speakers of Camfranglais, there is a much larger number able to communicate rather fluently in Pidgin-English than in standard English [10, 11]. In CFA it is obvious that the English language interacts with French. This may give rise to the idea that CFA is used to communicate on topics among bilingual speakers both in French and in English, which in this case would be a code switching. However, most French-speaking young people in Cameroon only know English at the level that they have been able to master at school, and English-speaking and French-speaking people tend to live separately from each other, do not mix and do not show much liking to each other. If the main condition for being able to speak the CFA is to be a Francophone, then there's no need to know English: CFA is not mixed code as franlof (or francolof) in Dakar, where “interlocutors resort to the mixing of the two codes (French and Wolof) so that competence in the French language during a conversation on a specific topic was shown as approximately the same as the Wolof [19, 12].

Studies on the use of CFA among speakers suggest that this language is woven into the fate of the French language of Cameroon. There is a “continuum” of the French language of Cameroon, on one pole of which there is a very pure literary language written by famous African writers and intellectuals, and the second pole is lost in an unknown zone, where there are various almost undistinguishable forms resulting from structural simplification of the language-substrate [16].

While the status of the French language in Cameroon's linguistic mosaic is not in doubt, its real value as a language reflecting the identity allowing the speakers to express that they belong to Cameroon remains in question. It is from this perspective that many Cameroonian and foreign linguists, such as: Biloa [2, 3], Chia [4], Echu [6, 7], C. De Feral [10, 11, 12], Mendo Ze [17], Efoua-Zengue [9], etc. have studied various faces of CFA, both from the point of view of semiotics, and CFA functioning in relation to language-superstratum. All these studies show the role that CFA can play in search of Cameroonian identity and tomorrow's language policy.

Today, linguists put CFA together with thousands of other languages spoken on the planet. In Cameroon, some famous writers, such as: Patrice Nganang, Mercedes Fouda, and Gabriel Fonkou Kuitche use CFA as a style of modern prose. CFA symbolizes a language of free choice that fits well into the concept of multi-lingual environment of Cameroon. Others see CFA as a language that could be described as “the Cameroonian French language” [13].

CFA is most typically used for “horizontal communication”, i.e. communication among equals in a peer group. Its major function is “that of creating/reforming boundaries, unifying its speakers as members of a single speech community and excluding outsiders from intragroup communication” [18]. CFA is popular among young people with higher education, who lost a job in the professional field because of unemployment and now work part-time as street vendors, taxi-drivers and in small businesses.

CFA has gained and continues to gain new opportunities for communication not only through media (radio, television, internet, newspapers) but also through the world of entertainment. It became fashionable due partially to its use by popular musicians such as, Lapiro de Mbanga, Petit Pays, and others. Music that blends Cameroonian Pidgin English and French is especially appealing to young people. For example, in the songs of Lapiro de

Mbanga “No make erreur” (Don't Make a mistake), “Mimba we” (Think About Us) you can see such a hybrid structure as “reme ana djaka don laka dry echantillon fo ethiopia” (fr. “la mere et les enfants ont maigri comme des echantillons ethiopiens” = “Mother and children grew thin as “Ethiopians”), “integration nationale na weti non” (Fr. l'integration nationale C'est quoi donc=“national integration, what is it?”).

CFA is also gaining popularity thanks to humor and folk theatre. Such artists as Dave K. Moktoi, Jean Miche Kankan, among others, criticizing the socio-political situation in the country, created a hybrid syntax. For example, we can come across such figures of speech as “je dis que taisez toi...” (literally “I say that shut up”). CFA became a powerful tool to expose the social-economic and political problems of the country (employment, corruption, tribalism).

A phrase in CFA can be built based on the structure of the French language (superstrate language) and lexical units of the languages of the substrates can serve as components for these structures. It should be noted that it is the French language that provides morpho-syntactic matrix of CFA (word order and grammatical morphemes). At the same time CFA is characterized by a great number of lexical loans (mostly from Cameroonian languages, English and Pidgin English) many of which have undergone structural or semantic changes. The use of loan words is not “systematic” as it would be in the case of switching from one code to another (language or language variant) but is due to the discursive choice of the speaker. Here are some examples of utterances in CFA:

CFA “Gars tu know que le prof a interrogé hier? – Il a tell que ceux qui n'étaient pas au school auront zéro” (Fr. Gars, sais-tu que le professeur a interrogé hier? Il a dit que ceux qui n'étaient pas au cours (à l'école) auront zéro). = “Boy, you know what the teacher asked yesterday? He said that those who are not in class (at school) will receive zero” [5].

CFA “Ma macho est back des States dans la night”. (Fr. Ma mère est rentrée des Etats-Unis hier soi). = “My mom came back from the United States last night.”

If the structure of the matrix language of the statement is complex, it is simplified in CFA utterance, e.g. Fr. “Comme le devoir de linguistique était difficile, j'ai préféré m'en aller”. CFA “Le test de linguistique étant sharp, j'ai préféré piack”. = “Since the task of linguistics was difficult, I chose to leave”. The sentence in French has a more complex structure than in CFA.

We also observed semantic changes in certain words through extension or restriction of meaning.

3.1 Extension of meaning

Back comes from the English verb “to come back”

In the first case, the meaning is the same.

Example 1: CFA “Ma macho est **back** des States dans la night. Fr. “Ma mère est rentrée des Etats-Unis hier soir.” = “My mom came back from the United States last night”.

It gains additional meaning “to give smth back” in CFA:

Example 2: CFA “Je lui ai **back** son CD”. Fr. “Je lui ai rendu son CD” = “I gave him his CD back”.

Ngomma – a noun derived from Bulu noun “ngovina” (which comes from the English noun “governor”) means “a government official; governor, prefect or super-prefect”. With the extension of meaning also means “power of the state or any person working in the administration”.

Example 1: CFA “Le **ngomma** est venu installer notre nkukuma”. Fr. “Le préfet / sous-préfet est venu installer notre chef de village” = “The prefect came to appoint the head of the village”.

Example 2: CFA “Mon pater wok pour le **ngomma**”. Fr. “Mon père travaille dans l'administration (il est fonctionnaire)” = “My father works in administration (he is an official)”.

Pach comes from the French noun “passer” – to spend, pass, go, etc. While maintaining the same meaning, has the additional meaning of the French “dépasser” – to beat.

Example 1: CFA “Je suis **pach** devant la piaule de ma nga sans la mite”. Fr. “Je suis passé devant la maison de ma copine sans la voir”. = “I walked past my friend's house without going to her”.

Example 2: CFA “Le wok qu'on m'a gui **pach** les do”. Fr. “La quantité de travail que j'ai à faire dépasse (est supérieure au) le salaire que j'aurai”. = (Literally) “The amount of work I need to do exceeds the salary I will get”.

3.2 Restriction meaning

The **Nak** from English verb “to knock” means “to beat” somebody.

Example: CFA Une man qui **nak** sa nga est un ndemur”. Fr. “Un homme qui tape sur sa femme est un fainéant / faible”. = “The man who beats his wife is a weakling”.

Criss (or **crish**) verb comes from the English noun “crisis” and means “to be furious”.

Example: CFA. “Mon pater a **crish** sur mon mbindi parce qu'il a lost l'examen”. Fra. “Mon père était en colère contre mon petit frère parce qu'il n'a pas réussi à son examen”. = “My father was very angry with my little brother because he didn't pass the exam”.activities.

3.3 Lexical borrowing

As a rule, languages do not live in an isolated world, and are in constant interaction and competition with other linguistic systems that are internal or external to a particular sociolinguistic community [1]. The situation in Cameroon favoured various forms of symbiosis among the languages of contact, which can be manifested in the form of interference, particularly at the lexical level.

The main scope of loanwords in the French language in Cameroon is represented by three main sources: local Cameroonian languages, English and Pidgin English.

3.4 Lexical borrowing

Cameroonian French is actively borrowed from local Cameroonian languages. It successfully integrates lexico-semantic material of Cameroonian languages. Borrowing takes place independently of the social class to which the speaker belongs, his/her sex, age, level of culture and family traditions. In the framework of the diachronic approach, this integration reflects the desire of Cameroonian people to openly demonstrate their cultural and linguistic affiliation. They willingly express their cultural identity by using words from their native language to express their feelings, thoughts and customs in the immediate surroundings.

Chia [4], Efooua-Zengue [9] and Mendo Ze [17] in their works distinguish 5 groups of languages of ethnic and interethnic communication, which are the main donors of vocabulary:

1. Bassa and Duala;
2. Ewondo and Bulu;
3. Bamileke;
4. Fulfulde and Hausa;
5. Pidgin-English

Here are some examples:

Caco – a noun, denoting “baggage” in the language of Douala.

Means also “gifts” that are put in a bag or sack; “gift”. It also takes the meaning of “anything that is put in a bag or luggage: clothes, personal belongings”.

Example 1: CFA. “Je vais avec le travel **caco** de mon mbindi. Fr. “Je vais voyager avec le sac de mon petit frère”. = “I'm going to travel with my little brother's bag”.

Example 2: CFA. “Où sont les **cacos** que tu m'as gardé de mbeng?” Fr. “Où sont les cadeaux que tu m'as ramenés de panam?” = “Where are the gifts you brought me from abroad?”.

Example 3: CFA. “Quand j'étais mbindi, je tchayais souvent les **cacos** de mon big pour comôt”. Fr. “Quand j'étais petit/plus jeune, je mettais souvent les vêtements (chemises, pantalons, tennis,

montres etc) de mon grand frère pour sortir”. = “When I was younger, I used to wear clothes (shirts, pants, sneakers, watches, etc.) on the way out of my older brother”.

Nyè – a noun that comes from the Ewondo word “ngnyé” (meaning “nasty”) and means “a man in a police uniform, policeman, etc”. They received this nickname because of the terrible corruption existing in police (assaults on drivers, especially taxi drivers) that caused revulsion among the population. Sometimes it can be used as a verb and means “to see, to meet”.

Example: CFA. “L'autre day go nyè je suis le directeur. Fr. “L'autre jour je suis allé rencontrer le directeur”. = “The other day I went to meet the Director”.

Wâka – a noun that comes from one of the Cameroonian languages and originally means “a process of walking or a person who constantly walks”. In CFA it stands for “women involved in prostitution” (because they are constantly walking along the sidewalk in search of customers).

Example: CFA “Les **wâkas** de maintenant ne lap plus avec les dôs, si tu n'as pas fap kolos pour la naïte, passe ta route”. Fr. “Les prostitués d'aujourd'hui ne rigolent plus avec les tarifs, si tu n'as pas au moins 5 000f pour passer la nuit avec elle, passe ton chemin”. = “Modern prostitutes no longer joke about prices, if you don't have at least 5,000 francs to spend the night with them, go your way”.

3.5 Borrowings from the English language

Example. CFA. “Le prof-ci va me finir, je n'ai pas **do** son work qu'il a **give** hier”. Fr. “Le professeur va me punir, je n'ai pas fait le devoir qu'il a donné hier”. = “The teacher will punish me, I did not do the task that he asked yesterday”.

In the above-mentioned example, the lexical units “do” and “give” are used in the same meaning as in English, “do” and “give” respectively. However, many of the loan words acquire a new meaning.

Level – a noun comes from the English word “level”, in some cases also means “size” and “a person's status”.

Example 1: CFA. “Ton **level** de game a grap. Fr. “Ton niveau de jeu (on parle généralement du football) a augmenté”. = “Your level of play has risen (usually in football)”.

Example 2: CFA. “Ce gars avec les waka **high level**”. Fr. “Ce gars marche avec les gros calibres (personnes importantes)”. = “This guy goes out with important people”.

Spirit – a noun comes from the English word “spirit”. It is used to describe a person's particular talents or courage.

Example: CFA. “Ton **spirit** est trop fort; tu as dou how pour composer la nga gui a ndem all môte ici o kwatt?” Fr. “Tu es très courageux; comment as-tu fait pour conquérir cette fille qui a dit non à tous les autres gars qui lui ONT des avances dans ce quartier?” = “You're very brave; how could you win over this girl who turned down all the guys in this neighborhood who wanted to date with her?”

3.6 Borrowings from Pidgin-English

Pidgin-English is part of Cameroon's language reality. Currently, like other 250 languages, it belongs to Cameroon's cultural heritage, and takes an active part in the formation of the vocabulary of CFA.

For example, we can come across such words as: makalapati, mbinda, nangaboko, ngatta, ngomnah, ngrimbah, nguémé, njangu, do, tchotchoro, ndoss, etc.

Awache – a noun meaning “to take, to steal”.

Example: CFA “On a **awache** mon phone en ville”. Fr. “On m'a piqué (volé) mon téléphone en ville = “They stole my mobile phone when I was in town”.

Hambock – a noun meaning “fooling, fun”.

Example: CFA. “Les ngas aiment d'abord **hambock** les gars avant de tell qu'elle yah moh” Fr. “Les filles aiment d'abord faire

tourner les gars en rond avant de leur dire qu'elles les aiment aussi. ” = “Girls love to turn your (guy's) head before they say they love you too”.

Tchop – a noun and a verb from Pidgin-English, originating from English verb “to chew”, means “to eat, to take meals”.

Example: CFA. “J'ai tchop le soya à la brique avant de go jonam les gars pour le ndjoka ”. Fr. “J'ai mangé du soya à la Brique avant d'aller rejoindre les gars pour faire la fête”. = “I had soy in Brique before joining my friends and having a party”.

4. Conclusions

Camfranglais is a highly hybrid urban-type sociolect in the major cities of Cameroon, Yaoundé and Douala. Despite the presence of many languages in it, its morpho-syntactic system remains essentially based on French. This code is characterized by simplification of structures and grammatical forms. Most likely CFA cannot be considered as a language with its own system. The main sources of loan words are such languages of wider communication as Basaa, Duala, Ewondo, Bulu, Bamileke, Fulfulde, Hausa and Pidgin-English.

From the functional point of view, CFA is used as a jargon and has clear social functions. It signals rebellion against authority and societal expectations. It emerged as the modern Cameroonian urban jargon to mark off their identity as a new social group in opposition to established groups but gradually transformed into a tool for the whole society to expose the socio-economic and political problems of the country.

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