Hybrid juvenile discourse in Cameroon

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0 Introduction

Camfranglais[1], a highly hybrid sociolect of the urban youth type (Kießling and Mous 2004) in Cameroon's big cities Yaoundé and Douala, serves its adolescent speakers as an icon of 'resistance identity'. They consciously create and 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'. The present contribution explores the strategies employed in the process of lexical manipulation and goes beyond Kießling 2005 in that it looks into the ambivalent nature of Camfranglais as an 'antilanguage' (Halliday 1978) which reflects a provocative attitude of its speakers and their jocular disrespect of linguistic norms and purity on the one side and the way it grows in the media to become an icon of an emerging new identity of modern juvenile Cameroonian urbanity.

In many multilingual and multiethnic states of Africa which have an exoglossic language policy of a long standing, such as Cameroon, linguistic hybridity of this kind is a recipe to overcome the feeling of deprivation and alienation, transcend ethnicity and linguistic fragmentation and overcome exclusion and authoritarianism by appropriating and vernacularising elitarian ex-colonial languages such as French and English while at the same time de-stigmatising vehicular languages such as Pidgin English. In this context, hybridity is a key to linguistically empower the majority of the population for communicative participation and to realise sustainable economic and technological development and democratisation.

After a brief overview of the linguistic characterstics (section 1) and the historical development of Camfranglais (section 2), section 3 focuses on its sociolinguistic and sociocultural functions, elaborating on its ongoing expansion from an adolescent jargon to an icon of an emerging new identity of modern juvenile Cameroonian urbanity in the big cities of Cameroon, Douala and Yaoundé. This functional change is accompanied by a change of attitudes towards Camfranglais which is addressed in section 4. The conclusion (section 5) finally comes to discuss the charm and chances of hybridity: linguistic hybridisation, as employed in the making of Camfranglais, serving as the only effective and appropriate strategy to ameliorate and to overcome the disastrous effects of a schizophrenic language policy which deprives major parts of Cameroon's population of their linguistic identity turning them into immigrants in their own country.

1 The linguistic properties of Camfranglais

A rough idea of the linguistic flavour of Camfranglais could be gleaned from its use in artistic discourse such as the chorus of the song "Je go" (1) by the Cameroonian hiphop star Koppo.[2] In (1) the original Camfranglais wording is given in the first paragraph, followed by a free translation into English in the second.

> (1) Chorus of the song "Je go" by hiphop star Koppo
>
>> CF[3]: *Si tu vois ma <u>ngo</u>, dis lui que je <u>go</u>*
>> *Je <u>go</u> chez les <u>watt</u> nous <u>falla</u> les <u>do</u>*
>> *La <u>galère</u> du <u>kamer</u> toi-même tu <u>know</u>*
>> *Tu <u>bolo</u> tu <u>bolo</u> mais ou sont les <u>do</u>*
>>
>> 'If you see my girl-friend, tell her I will leave
>> I will go to the whites, we look for money
>> These hardships of Cameroon, you know it yourself
>> You work and work, but where is the pay?'

Even with a sound knowledge of French and English, it might be difficult to understand the meaning of these lyrics. The reason for this is that Camfranglais, as it is used in this context, is characterised by a highly hybrid lexicon. While it basically employs a French morphosyntactic frame, non-French lexical items, marked by underscoring in (1), tend to be inserted in semantic key-positions. These non-French insertions are taken from various sources, mostly from Pidgin English (PE) or various Cameroonian languages such as Ewondo and Duala. Thus, *go* [go][4] 'leave', *know* [no] and *watt* [wat] 'white' seem to represent direct borrowings from English, while *falla* [fala] 'search for' and *do* [do] 'money, payment' are taken from Pidgin English; *falla* ultimately derives from English *follow*, whereas the etymology of *do* in PE is obscure: it may be a truncation either of Standard English *dollar* or English substandard *dough* for the meaning 'money' or Ewondo *dólà* 'money', which in itself seems to be linked to English 'dollar'. The word *ngo* [ŋgo] 'girl' is a truncation of Ewondo *ngondele* 'young girl' (Biloa 2003, 248), *kamer* [kamɛr] is the truncated French word *Cameroun*, and *bolo* [bòló] 'work' is ambiguous again: it may either be derived directly from French *boulot* 'work' or from Duala *eboló'* [èbòlóʔ] 'work, job, post' which might represent an adaptation of the French word. The point here is that direct borrowings such as *go* and *know* are not that numerous in CF. Instead most borrowings tend to be manipulated on all structural levels – phonological, morphological and semantic –, in order to create a new emblematic lexicon. Since the spirit of CF lives in these lexical creations, the key to its understanding lies in the way how they are formed.

1.1 Phonological manipulation

The most common phonological manipulation employed in the creation of neologisms in CF is truncation, i.e. the deletion of segments or even syllables in either terminal (2) or initial position (3).

(2) Terminal truncation

    (a)   *Kamer* [kamɛr] 'Cameroon' < French *Cameroun*

    (b)   *dang* [dɑŋ] 'dangerous' < French[5] *dangereux*, e.g. in
              Le blow était dang. 'This fight was very dangerous.' (Chia and Gerbault
              1991: 274).

    (c)   *bùt, mbùt* [(m)bùt] 'fool, foolish' < Ewondo *(m)bùtúkù* 'stranger'

    (d)   *kat* [kat] 'quarter' < French *quartier*

(3) Initial truncation

    (a)   *gnole* [ɲɔ́l]   < French *bagnole* 'vehicle'

    (b)   *lage* [lɛ̀dʒ]   < English *village*

It is often claimed that metathesis is also a central process in the coinage of new words in Camfranglais (Chia and Gerbault 1991, Mbah-Onana and Mbah-Onana 1994, Biloa 2003, Ntsobé, Biloa and Echu 2008: 98). However, this might be true to a far lesser extent than supposed, since it is often ignored in this context that most of the examples, e.g. *meuf* [mɛf] 'woman, girlfriend' (< French *femme*), *rèmè* [rɛ́m(ɛ̀)] 'mother' (< French *mère*), *rèpè ~ répé* [rɛ́p(ɛ̀)] 'father' (< French *père*), *rèsè* [rɛ́s(ɛ̀)] 'sister' (< French *sœur*) and *rèfrè* [rɛ́fr(ɛ̀)] 'brother' (< French *frère*), have perfect parallels in the Verlan varieties of urban French in Paris and other cities (Goudaillier 1997, Andreini 1985, Seguin 1996, George 1993). So just citing them does not prove that metathesis is really productive in Camfranglais, since those items might simply have been adopted from substandard varieties of French already in metathesized form.[6] Examples which might better illustrate metathesis as a productive process in Camfranglais are listed in (4), e.g. *djibo* [ɖʲibo] 'someone' (based on *body* which is derived from English *somebody* by truncation) and *sitac* [sitak] 'taxi' (which seems to coexist with *taco*).[7]

(4) Metathesis

    (a)   *djibo* [ɖʲibo] 'someone'   < *body* < English *somebody*

    (b)   *sitac* [sitak] 'taxi'   < French *taxi*

    (c)   *stycmic* [stikmik] 'complicated, delicate'   < French *mystique*

    (d)   *tcham* [tʃam] 'fight'   < English *match*

1.2 Morphosyntactic manipulation

The most salient mechanisms of morphosyntactic manipulation are hybridization and dummy or parasitic affixation. Hybridization is taken here as the process of combining lexemes and affixes which are not from the same source language. Thus in (5) French verbal stems are combined with the English gerund suffix *–ing* and in (6) hybridization is achieved by deriving nouns of agent by applying the Pidgin English suffix *–man* to non-Pidgin words, whereas in (7) non-French lexical items are combined with French

suffixes such as *–is* (causative)*, -er* (infinitive)*, –ois* (adjective)*, –iste* (noun of agent)*, -ia* (abstract quality).

(5) Hybridization by affixation of the English gerund suffix *–ing* to non-English words

> *largue-ing* [larg-iŋ] 'scoring' < French *larguer* 'shoot, score, fire'
> *lanc-ing* [lãŋs-iŋ] 'hurling' < French *lancer* 'hurl'

(6) Hybridization by affixation of the Pidgin English agentive suffix *–man* to non-Pidgin English words

> *fait-man* [fé-màn] 'crook, cheat, rogue' < French *fait* 'done'
> *donne-man* [dɔ́n-màn] 'easy-going guy who is generous' < French *donner* 'give'
> *élèkè-man* [èlɛ́kɛ̀-màn] 'useless fool who is too strict with obeying rules unnecessarily'

(7) Hybridization by affixation of French suffixes to non-French words

(a) *shak-er* [ʃek-e] 'to shake' < English *shake*
  know-er [now-e] 'to know' < English *know*

(b) *whit-is-er* [wait-iz-e] 'to talk like a white person' < English *white*

(c) *stat-ois* [stat-wa] 'someone who is or has been in the U.S.' < English *States*

(d) *Mbeng-uiste* [mbɛŋg-ist] 'someone who goes regularly to France' < Duala *Mbeng* 'France'

(e) *fait-man-ia* [fé-màn-ia] 'villainy, dirty tricks' < Camfranglais [fé-màn] 'crook, cheat, rogue'

There is also the application of non-productive French derivational suffixes such as *-ard* (8a) and *–al* (8b). Since this is also typical of French argot (Dauzat 1946; Guiraud 1956; Calvet 1994) in general, it is not possible to determine if these derivations are genuine Camfranglais innovations or borrowings from a non-standard French source.

(8) Application of non-productive French derivational suffixes

(a) *ghettos-ard* [gɛtoz-ar] 'someone who lives in the ghetto'
  fêt-ard [fɛt-ar] 'someone who likes to party a lot'

(b) *mbèr-al* [mbɛ́r-ál] 'policeman' < Camfranglais *mbèrè* [mbɛ́rɛ́] id. (< French *béret* 'barett')
  merc-al [mɛrs-al] 'Mercedes car' < *Mercedes*

Hybridization could also be achieved by prefixation of a homorganic nasal which serves to give a Bantu flavour to non-Bantu words (Chia and Gerbault 1991; Biloa 2003: 260). Such prenasalisation has also been noted as a distinct feature of Pidgin English as spoken by people of Bamileke origin (de Féral 1989: 45) who form part of a demo-graphically sizable and economically dominant ethnic group in Cameroon. The back-

ground to this might be seen in an on-going process of reduction which affects the noun-class systems of a considerable number of languages of the Bamileke subgroup of Grassfields Bantu in Cameroon. Thus, in Bamileke-Ghomala' (Nissim 1981), Bamileke-Fe'fe' (Hyman 1972, Hyman, Voeltz and Tchokokam 1970), Bali-Mungaka (Stöckle and Tischhauser 1993, Hombert 1980) and Bamum (Hombert 1980), a noun-initial nasal has lost its semantic content and its original function of indicating a specific noun class. However, it remains a highly emblematic feature of noun formation and therefore lends itself easily to a utilisation for the purpose of deformation and deliberate hybridization (9), even beyond the domain of nouns, as could be seen in its application to deform verbs such as French *gérer* 'asminister'.

(9) Hybridization by prefixing a Bantoid homorganic nasal *N-* to non-Bantu words

n-gé [ŋ-gé] 'gay'	< French *gai* or English *gay*
n-zéré [n-zere] 'administer'	< French *gérer* 'administer'
n-ga [ŋ-gà] 'dame, woman, girlfriend'	< English *girl*
m-bèrè [m-bɛ́rɛ́] 'policeman, soldier'	< French *béret* 'barett'

Dummy affixation by parasitic suffixes *–o* (10a) and *–sh* (10b) is often combined with truncation.[8] The difference to hybridization in (5-9) is that the affixes have no semantic content and could not be ascribed to any specific source.

(10) Dummy affixation

(a) Parasitic suffixes *–o* and *–cho*

pa-cho [pa-tʃo]	< French *papa* 'father'
ma-cho [ma-tʃo]	< French *mama* 'mother'
tac-o [ták-ò]	< French *taxi*
ba–cho [ba-tʃo]	< French *baccalauréat exam*
host–o [hɔst-o]	< English *hospital*
merc–o [mɛrs-o]	< *Mercedes car*
loc-o [lok-o] 'home'	< French *location*

(b) Parasitic suffixes *–sh* and *–Vsh*

ba–sh [ba-ʃ]	< English *basketball*
cin–osh [sin-ɔʃ]	< English / French *cinéma*
mét-osh [met-ɔʃ]	< French *métis* 'mixed blood'
tac–esh [tak-ɛʃ]	< French *taxi*

A purely syntactic phenomenon adopted from Pidgin English is the extensive utilisation of serial verb constructions such as, e.g. in (11) comprising the verbs *go* 'go', *faire* [fɛr] 'make' and *comot* [kɔmɔt] 'come out' (Stein-Kanjora forthcoming).

(11) *Le djibo go faire comot le bibidjuk de sa rème qui etait died en cent qatre*
   'The guy went to excavate the skull of his mother who died in 1400.'

1.3 Semantic manipulation

The most common semantic manipulations to be found are metonymy (12), dysphemism (14) and onomastic synecdoche (15). Thus, *cam-gas* [kàm-gâs] 'heavily built person' (12a), derived from English *guards*[9], was originally restricted to heavily built and muscular persons serving as guards and became generalised to refer to any muscular person, irrespective of his function. The body part noun 'belly' is used to convey the concept of pregnancy (12b) – which is a functional extension found in many Cameroonian languages, e.g. in Isu (13), a Grassfields Bantu language from the Ring subgroup, and might have entered Camfranglais via Cameroonian Pidgin English (Todd 1985: 122). The noun *boutte* [bùt] 'fool', derived from the truncated Ewondo noun *(m)bùtúkù* 'stranger', illustrates the functional extension from the concept of a type of person to a quality conventionally associated with her / him (12c). In (12d) the deformed French noun *béret* 'barret' is taken to refer to those persons who typically wear it.

(12) Metonymy

    (a)   *blo* [blo(u)] 'fight' < English *blow*
               bus [bas] 'go' < English *bus*
               shap [ʃap] 'difficult' < English *sharp*
               bèlέ 'pregnant' < English *belly*
               (m)boutte [(m)bùt] 'fool, foolish' < Ewondo *(m)bùtúkù* 'stranger'
               mbèrè [mbέrέ] 'policeman, soldier' < French *béret* 'barret'
               cam-gas [kàm-gâs] 'heavily built person' < English 'guards'

    (b)   *má*   *ŋgà*   *έ*   *bèlέ*
               my   girl   be   belly
               'My wife is pregnant.'

    (c)   *Il me prend pour un boutte [bùt].*
               'He treats me like a fool.'

    (d)   *Les mbèrès [mbέrέ] aiment beaucoup des problèmes.*
               'Uniformed people very much like (to cause) problems.'

(13) Isu (Grassfields Bantu): concept of pregnancy expressed by body part metonymy

      wíy   *wám*   *də̀*   *únîə*
      wife   my   be   belly
      'My wife is pregnant.'

The essence of dysphemism is to render neutral concepts negative by applying derogatory designations or by highlighting unfavourable aspects of the referent (Allan and Burridge 1991), as in *bolè* [bɔ́lέ] 'finish, terminate', *couplié* [kuplʲe] 'wrinkle-neck' and *les fatigués* 'the exhausted' (14) used to refer to 'make love', 'rich person' and 'elderly people', respectively.

(14) Dysphemism

(a)　*couplié* 'rich old person, old fart' < French *cou* 'neck' and *plié* 'wrinkled'
mange-mille 'policeman' < French *mange* 'eat!' and *mille* 'thousand'[10]
jetter 'drop (of a passenger)' < French *jetter* 'throw out'
lourd 'rich' < French *lourd* 'heavy'
tomber 'go' < French *tomber* 'fall'
baptiser 'leave without paying' < French *baptiser* 'baptise'
chantier 'small informal restaurant' < French *chantier* 'building-site'
appuyer 'kiss' < French *appuyer* 'press'
saccager 'have sex' < French *saccager* 'loot, pillage, plunder'
torpiller 'have sex' < French *torpiller* 'torpedo'
visée 'space in-between a girl's legs as she walks' < French *visée* 'aim, mark'
airbags 'breast and buttocks (of a girl)' < English *airbags*
bolè [bɔ́lέ] 'make love' < Camfranglais [bɔ́lέ] 'finish, terminate'
bouffer [bùfé] 'cheat, earn' < French *bouffer* 'eat, devour'
lom [lɔ́m] 'cheat, deceive' < Bamileke-Ghomala' *lɔ́m* 'fuck'
les fatigués [lé fàtìgé] 'elderly people, old people' < French *les fatigués* 'the exhausted'

(b)　*J'ai bolé* [bɔ́lé] *avec elle cette night.*
'I have made love to her that night.' < 'I have terminated / finished with her that night.'

Dysphemism also combines with acronyms such as *opep* 'illegal taxi' which derives from 'organisation des pays exportateurs de poussière' ('organisation of dust exporting countries') (Echu 1999c: 125), a satirical allusion to the fact that these taxis are frequently found in rural areas where they collect a lot of dust on rough roads.

It is also common to find highly satirical instances of onomastic synecdoche (15), i.e. cases where the name of a person or a place has become conventionalised as (part of the) designation for one of its salient properties.[11] Thus, *Kondengui*, the name of a big prison near Yaoundé, has come to be used as a general term for 'prison' and *Bakassi*, the name of a disputed peninsula at the border of Cameroon and Nigeria and object of armed conflicts between both countries, has become a general term for any 'dangerous place'.

(15) Onomastic synecdoche

kondengui [kɔndɛŋgi] 'prison' < *Kondengui* prison near Yaoundé

bakassi [bakasi] 'dangerous place' < *Bakassi* peninsula

tchanchouss [tʃantʃus] 'sandalette made in Cameroon' < Pidgin English *Dschang-Shoes*, i.e. shoes made by the inhabitants of Dschang mainly from old tyres

johnny [dʒɔni] 'to walk' < English whiskey brand name 'Johnny Walker'

kodjak [kodʒak] 'totally shaved head' < Kojak, from the name of a hero of an American TV series

2 A short history of Camfranglais

In order to understand the linguistic form and the sociopsychological functions of CF, it is necessary to look briefly into the macro-sociolinguistic profile of Cameroon. With approximately 248 distinct national languages (Breton and Fohtung 1991: 11) or even 286 (Lewis 2009), Cameroon has been described as 'Afrique en miniature'. It is number two in Africa after Nigeria, as regards sheer linguistic complexity.[12] While no single African language dominates on the national level, there are several regionally dominant languages which also serve as verhicular languages, e.g. Duala, Beti (Ewondo, Bulu, Fang), Basaa, Fulfulde, Mungaka, Bamileke (Ghomala', Yemba, Medumba, Fe'fe', Ngiemboon), Kanuri, Hausa, Arabic and – last, but not least – Pidgin English.

Since its independence in 1960, Cameroon has adopted and adhered to an exoglossic language policy, i.e. none of its 248+ indigenous languages plays a vital role in public domains of official language use on the national level such as education, administration, public services and politics. Instead Cameroon has installed the imported languages of its former colonial masters, French and English, as official languages. This official exoglossic bilingualism is the outcome of Cameroon's colonial past. After its 'creation' in the Berlin Africa Conference in 1884 and an initial period under German rule (1884-1918), the territory of Cameroon was divided as a consequence of the treaty of Versailles after World War I: four fifths were mandated to France, the remaining fifth to Britain. Both colonial powers installed their languages in their territories, which made the French Cameroons francophone and the British Cameroons anglophone. With the reunification of both parts in 1961 after independence, Cameroon had to face the problem of building a nation from a multitude of highly diverse, partly antagonistic, ethnic groups who had already started to define themselves along the lines of two major competing identities, francophone and anglophone, superimposed on the background of 248+ ethnolinguistic identities.

Just like many other African states with a high degree of internal linguistic diversity, Cameroon resorted to exoglossy in this dilemma, since exoglossy was preceived as the only way to preserve national unity, to avoid tribalism and international isolation and to catch up with Europe in scientific and technological progress (Heine 1979: 58-60, Reh and Heine 1982: 168ff., Bokamba 1995). Last but not least, exoglossy was a solution which seemed so much cheaper than developing local linguistic resources along the lines of an endoglossic model which would incur costs for alphabeticisation, standardisation, terminological expansion and translation. In Cameroon's specific case, the measure taken to reconcile internal oppositions was to declare official bilingualism, i.e. French and English were installed as official languages of equal status and the nationwide promotion of this bilingualism was guaranteed, as formulated in article 1, paragraph 3 of the constitution of 1996. Official bilingualism has become a quasi-sacred symbol of Cameroon's national unity and has gained Cameroon prestige and importance on the international level (Wolf 2001: 185, Tchoungui 1983: 113).

The reality, however, proves all this a fallacy: official bilingualism (Echu 1999a, 1999b) is very imbalanced, due to the predominance of francophones on the political and administrative scene, many of whom cannot speak English (Chumbow and Simo Bobda 1995: 19). In order to move up the social or professional ladder, it is absolutely necessary for anglophones to become bilingual in French, whereas francophones do not have to become bilingual in English. Eventually, many pupils in the francophone area

leave secondary school without being able to even hold a rudimentary conversation in English (Kouega 1999).

As much as the official bilingualism at the national level is a fiction, individual French/English bilingualism is also grossly underdeveloped. Even though most individuals are multilingual in a series of indigenous Cameroonian languages, they are either francophone or anglophone, but only rarely both. This is because identity has come to be defined partly along the lines of the ex-colonial languages. Most Cameroonians, however, have no adequate mastery of either French or English and are thus excluded from participation in the modern state. This is because of an insufficient infrastructure for spreading the official languages, English and French, in the country (Rosendal 2008).

All this has come to create an identity crisis at large and a communicative vacuum, especially in the big cities. First of all, there is a deep feeling of deprivation and alienation from African home languages. However, most of these languages do not qualify for wider communication in the multilingual big cities, since — apart from their restricted distribution — they are too much ethnically loaded and too strongly associated with traditionality and rurality. Furthermore, neither French nor English qualify as linguistic icons of identification: they are prestigeous, but have become elitarian languages of vertical communication (Heine 1977), i.e. they remain alien and are felt to be instruments of exclusion. The majority of Cameroonians has only very limited access to them. The corrupt elites who send their children to France or England for education anyway have no interest at all to change this situation, since it guarantees that they remain in power and straighten the path for their own children. Many people aspire to them, but feel they fail to satisfy the norms, so there is no potential of identification in neither English, even less in French. This leaves Cameroon with a communicative vacuum in the big citites[13] and a pressure to linguistically transcend ethnic and superimposed colonial boundaries under conditions of a language policy of exclusion which has only very recently come to change by admission of national languages as media of instruction in governmental schools (Rosendal 2008, Pius Tamanji p.c).

3 Functions of Camfranglais: from youth culture to new urban style

Camfranglais has grown to fill this communicative vacuum between the official languages, French and English, on the one side, and the indigenous languages of Cameroon on the other side. While opinions on its ultimate origins diverge[14], it is clear that Camfranglais has expanded considerably as an icon of an emerging new identity of modern juvenile Cameroonian urbanity since the 1970s, when the official bilingualism policy was intensified and francophone pupils became increasingly exposed to English and the other way round (Hecker 2009: 69). Since the late 1980s it has gained popularity by artists, especially musicians such as Lapiro de Mbanga and Koppo.

The urban youth could be seen in the vanguard of developing Camfranglais, because it is them, more than any other social group, who are naturally preoccupied with a quest for identity which comes necessarily with emancipation from their parents and reorientation which is basically a subordination to the norms of their peer group. Moreover, young people have come to be increasingly regarded in anthropology 'as

those who are able to create culture, understood as a hybrid form' (Boesen 2008: 111), due to their special capacity for appropriation and integration. Camfranglais could thus be seen to address and reflect primarily adolescent needs. It is typically used for 'horizontal communication', i.e. communication among equals in a peer group for transmitting the message of internal solidarity and excluding outsiders such as parents, mostly in informal settings where adolescents happen to interact, such as bus stations, school premises, parties and football-grounds, situations where they want to show off and present themselves as streetwise (Ntsobé, Biloa and Echu 2008: 50-54), with topics revolving around 'food and drink, money and ways of laying hands on it, sex and relationships with women, physical look of people and their feelings, and ways of addressing people and referring to them (Kouega 2003). Consequently, lexical elaboration or rather overlexicalisation affects the semantic domains of evaluative terms, social relations, money and sexuality, reflecting the full program of adolescent preoccupations (Ntsobé, Biloa and Echu 2008: 54-61). In contrast, other basic vocabulary is not affected at all, i.e. there are no specific CF terms for moon, sun, tree, mountain, bone etc.

Apart from this, however, the linguistic quest for identity is not only accomplished by distancing the older generations. Camfranglais rather seems to acquire new functions in addressing more general important needs, i.e. to downplay and transcend ethnic and linguistic distinctions, to overcome linguistic alienation and exclusion and to undercut formality and authoritarianism which is achieved by a jocular subversion of linguistic normativity. Thus, it has started to be effectively exploited for literary purposes, e.g. in Patrice Nganang's novel *Temps de chien* (Nganang 2001). This indicates that there is a growing awareness of Camfranglais for its potential to mark urbanity, transcend ethnic identity and also transcend the discourse paradigm of falling standards and reaching beyond the adolescent user group. These functions contribute for Camfranglais to gain popularity beyond the youth as an emergent urban Cameroonian code of identification, with the secrecy function gradually fading away. In contrast to European settings of 'resistant' youth culture, in Cameroon, just as in most other African settings, the generation conflict does not seem to be the predominant motor in the creation of Camfranglais any longer, it is rather a feeling of socio-economic deprivation and being excluded from the access to the commodities of the modern world by corrupt elites. This becomes obvious in the association of Camfranglais as a medium of artistic expression with rebels such as Lapiro de Mbanga, a song-writer and performer who used to be very popular since the late 1980's because he dared to articulate satirical criticism of corrupt politicians, e.g. in his banned song "Constitution constipée" for which he has recently been sentenced three years in prison. The song is an ironic criticism of Paul Biya, the president of Cameroon, referred to as *Big Katika* 'Big-Cashier' and *Répé Ndoss* 'Father Boss' in (16), who does not seem to care about pressing problems of the country, but is instead rather occupied with changing the country's constitution in order to make himself president for life time.

(16) Camfranglais in critical lyrics: Lapiro de Mbanga's "Constitution constipée"[15]

    CF: *Libérez Big <u>Katika</u>, libérez <u>Répé Ndoss</u>,*
            Le <u>pater</u> est fatigué oooo, foutez-lui la paix

> *Libérez Big <u>Katika</u>, libérez <u>Répé Ndoss</u>*
> *Le <u>pacho</u> est <u>daya</u> ooo, foutez-lui la paix*
>
> Set Big-Cashier free, set free Father Boss
> The father is old, let him in peace
> Set Big-Cashier free, set free Father Boss
> The father is dying, let him in peace

The attractiveness of Lapiro de Mbanga's lyrics, exemplified by the song's chours line in (16), owes to the fact that, beside Pidgin English and French, he uses Camfranglais items such as *Katika* 'cashier', *Répé* 'father', *pacho* 'father', marked by underscoring.

Taking up Heine's (1977) distinction of horizontal vs. vertical media of communication, i.e. media that signalise equal social status and solidarity (horizontal) vs. media used for establishing distance and instrumentalised for upper social mobility (vertical), the Camfranglais case exemplifies the formation of a new medium of horizontal communication basically from a vertical one, i.e. French, accomplished by actively creating a vacuum where norms could easily be manipulated. This is corroborated by the observation that youths frequently report that one of their principal motivations to use Camfranglais is that they feel relieved from the pressure to constantly observe the norms of the not fully mastered European standard languages French and, to a lesser extent, English.

Therefore, even if Camfranglais might, in its wake, have qualified as an 'antilanguage' (Halliday 1978), i.e. a metasign of resistence which serves to create identity by asserting difference from a dominant group (Hodge and Kress 1997: 53), it does not do so any longer. It rather seems to be on its way to become adopted by other social groups, spreading outside the urban youth, forming new norms and setting its own standards in the linguistic 'configuration of an urban identity' (McLaughlin 2001), slowly growing into an icon of an emerging new 'project identity' (Castells 1997), a symbol of progressiveness and modern urban life in Cameroon. The '[b]asis for transgenerational identification lies in the emancipatory power of this youth language, i.e. in the rejection of a hegemonic culture expressed by disregarding linguistic norms and by freeing oneself from the corset of the formal French language' (Boesen 2008: 113). Camfranglais, after all, seems to represent the process and the result of a creative appropriation of an imported foreign language, French, (Naguschewski and Trabant 1997), which remains an alien language and an instrument of exclusion employed by the elites to exclude the majority from participation.

4 Changing attitudes towards Camfranglais

Changing attitudes towards Camfranglais reflect its development into a new medium of identification. On the one side, positive ingroup attitudes towards Camfranglais contrast sharply with negative outgroup attitudes, i.e. an internal covert prestige of urban progressiveness contrasts with an external stigma of cultural degradation. Thus, Camfranglais is regarded as 'vachement cool' (Stein-Kanjora 2008) among youths, while youths who do not use it in their peer groups run the risk of being regarded as

'réglo', i.e. boring nerds: 'dans la jeunesse il faut parler ça pour se sentir dans la groupe, sinon on se sent un peu trop réglo, ça dit qu'on ne parle que du bon français, on est académicien' (Hecker 2009: 52-53). On the other hand, the phenomenon of Camfranglais still tends to be discussed within the prescriptive paradigm of falling standards and cultural degradation, being seen as a major obstacle which prevents pupils from learning proper French and sometimes even perceived as "vandalisme linguistique" (Lobé-Ewane 1989: 34). This is expressed in a cartoon cited in Stein-Kanjora (2008: 133) where a pupil addresses his teacher in Camfranglais *Monsieur, il y a un djo qui vous ask là-bas ...* "Sir, there is someone who asks for you over there ...", the teacher bursting out in indignation: "And I still teach him the language of Molière!"

However, there is also a growing awareness of the merits of Camfranglais regarding education and instruction. Thus, Camfranglais is increasingly used in the media (Hecker 2009: 21-22), e.g. in special columns of newspapers, in lyrics of songs and in youth magazines such as "100% Jeunes" (17), where it comes to serve a special function to address touchy topics pertaining to body hygene, health and sexuality which would be felt too awkward or unacceptable to be transmitted bluntly in the official languages, French or English.

> (17) Column "Entre meufs" in the teen magazine "100% Jeunes" 44, page 8 (Hecker 2009: 23)
>
> CF: *Il serait bénéfique pour les 'go' de palper leurs 'lolos' et de savoir interpréter des signes qui, en cas de négligence, aboutiraient à en cancer.*
>
> F: Il serait bénéfique pour les filles de palper leurs seins et de savoir interpréter des signes qui, en cas de négligence, aboutiraient à en cancer.
>
> E: "It helps a lot, if the girls touch their breasts and know how to recognise the symptoms which could indicate cancer."

5 Conclusion: the benefits of hybridity

Hybridity has come to be understood as the co-existence of conflicting norms and resources of meaning (Weißköppel 2005: 334) which could be exploited for improvisation and articulation of variable, ambivalent, even antagonistic, identities. In this vein, Camfranglais is clearly hybrid at its surface, as reflected in lexical, morphosyntactic and semantic hybridity discussed in sections 1.1-1.3. Remarkably, its hybridity also extends to the level of the matrix language, i.e. there seems to be „diglossia" of a French-based and a Pidgin English based variety of Camfranglais, as suggested by Chia (1990: 123) cited in Biloa (2003: 274f.), illustrated by the Camfranglais lexical item *blou* 'beat up', integrated in a French matrix in (18a) and a Pidgin English matrix in (18b). Thus, Camfranglais turns out to be a highly flexible lexical module, ready to be integrated into various morphosyntactic frames at hand.[16]

(18) Camfranglais in different matrix languages (Schröder 2003: 76)

    (a) CF as relexified French
        On l'a blou.
        'He has been beaten up.'

    (b) CF as relexified Cameroonian Pidgin English
        A fi blou yu.
        'I can beat you up.'

However, Camfranglais is more than simply a set of hybrid lexical items or grammatical rules. By its fluidity and the ephemeral character of its many coinages, it might even be problematic to define a grammatical system of Camfranglais and to pinpoint precisely lexical items. Camfranglais might better be characterised as a pool of linguistic resources upon which Cameroonians draw to articulate a meta-message of solidarity and a test ground where repressive and conflicting norms could easily be manipulated and amalgamated without a loss of face, on the contrary, even with a gain in face, since linguistic creativity and coining new lexical items seems to enhance in-group prestige.

The users of Camfranglais themselves have antagonistic allegiances and are forced to live hybrid identities. This exactly is the motor which constantly drives the production of its hybrid linguistic forms. Most speakers of Camfranglais want to claim the best of both worlds, the cosmopolitan life symbolized by French and English on the one side and the life of their home villages enshrined in their mother tongues on the other side. The project to build a Cameroonian identity from available resources could only succeed by hybridisation, since several functions have to be met simultaneously: overcome the feeling of cultural alienation and economic deprivation, transcend ethnicity and appropriate and vernacularise elitarian and alien French.[17]

In many multilingual and multiethnic states of Africa which have an exoglossic language policy of a long standing, such as Cameroon, linguistic hybridity of this kind is a recipe to overcome linguistic fragmentation, transcend ethnicity, undermine exclusion and authoritarianism and grow an icon of an emerging new "project identity" (Castells 1997), a symbol of modern urban life – which is the necessary precondition to linguistically empower the masses for communicative participation and to effectively realise economic growth, sustainable technological development and democratisation.

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Endnotes

[1] The very name Camfranglais – a blend of Cameroon, Français and Anglais – reflects its hybrid nature. While the name itself seems to be alternating with Francamglais, Francanglais or Frananglais, the fact of alternation in itself also representing something of a constitutive property, I will adhere to the term Camfranglais throughout this contribution for the sake of clarity.

[2] The lyrics are published in Stein-Kanjora 2008, Hecker (2009: 89) and on the website http://paroles.zouker.com.

[3] Abbreviations: CF Camfranglais, PE Pidgin English.

[4] Camfranglais data is rendered in two ways: in an orthography which is not standardized and basically inspired by the norms of the French orthography. This is generally insufficient for capturing crucial features of Camfranglais, e.g. tonal properties. Therefore, the orthographic rendering of an item in italics is supplemented by a phonetic transcription in square brackets according to IPA conventions. Contrary to French orthographic conventions, in this phonetic transcription the acute accent marks a high tone and the grave accent marks a low tone. The absence of tonal marking indicates that tonal specifications could not be obtained.

[5] The vowel quality [ɑ], instead of [e], confirms in this case that the truncation is based on the French source model, rather than the cognate English item.

[6] This is even more probable as one looks at Nouchi, the urban youth language of the Ivory Coast (Gouedan 1987, Kouadio N'gessan 1991, Kube 2003, Lafage 1991), which also comes up with a couple of verlanized forms, among them exactly those cited above. Moreover, the Camfranglais lexeme *babtou* 'European' is a verlanized version of *toubab* which must have been borrowed directly form Nouchi, since the source language Dyula is spoken in the Ivory Coast, but not in Cameroon. The background of this transfer is that Francophone Cameroonians tend to orientate towards the Ivory Coast which – as the most francophone country in Africa – is regarded as a trendsetter in many ways.

[7] If *tcha'* [tʃaʔ] 'arrest someone, take someone along with force' originates in English *catch* (as suggested by Kouega 2003: 514), there is at least one other process of distortion that has to be invoked to account for the change of terminal *k* to glottal stop – which is not too far-fetched though, since this kind of sound shift is frequently found in the Grassfields Bantu languages of Cameroon.

[8] Actually, *-o* is observed as dummy affix in many substandard varieties of widely different languages, such as English, German (Androutsopoulos 1998, Greule 1983/84), Sheng, the urban youth variety in Nairobi (Moga and Fee 1993, Abdulaziz and Osinde 1997). A parasitic affix *–sh* also occurs in Sheng.

[9] The first component derives from an abbreviation involving the name Cameroon.

[10] This coinage alludes to the custom widespread among policemen to take bribes of 1000 Francs CFA. It derives an extra-dysphemistic potential from its morphotactic and phonological parallelism to the French compound *mange-mil* 'millet-eater', a type of granivorous bird that feeds on millet (Kouega 2003: 523) and is a pest.

[11] See Kouega (2003: 524) for more examples.

[12] In terms of internal linguistic *diversity* by the way, it is rather Tanzania which deserves the label „Africa in miniature“, since *this* is the only country in Africa which accomodates representatives of all four traditionally recognized major language phylums on its territory – Afroasiatic, Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan and Khoisan (see Maho and Sands 2002) – whereas Cameroon could only claim to house representatives of three of them: Afroasiatic, Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan, but not Khoisan.

[13] Cameroonian Pidgin English would be an option due to its widespread use as a lingua franca and its potential of transcending ethnicity, but it is also disqualified due to its stigmatic association with notions such as lack of education, illiteracy and backwardness and its ban from most official domains.

[14] Tiayon-Lekobou (1985: 50) claims that it has originated from an initial criminal argot in Douala, whereas Lobé-Ewane (1989: 33) ascribes its creation to students at the University of Yaoundé. De Féral (1989: 20) who describes the same sociolect under the name "français makro" (probably derived from French *maquereau* 'pimp') actually distinguishes two varieties: "makro étroit" spoken primarily by thieves as a medium of secret communication, and "makro large" which is more widespread and spoken mainly by young urbans such as pupils, students, taxi-drivers for the purpose of symbolizing an urban identity.

[15] For full text see:
http://www.kwalai.com/index.php?option=com_musicbox&task=view&Itemid=164&catid=114&id=23

[16] The same phenomenon has been described by Tiayon Lekobou (1985: 62) as a contrast of "Camspeak via French syntax" vs. "Camspeak via Pidgin English syntax", and by de Féral (1989: 20f., 165ff.) as an opposition of "français makro" vs. "pidgin makro". If these findings could be corroborated by in-depth discourse studies, it would confirm the point that the emblematic core of Camfranglais indeed consists of a set of lexical items which could be embedded – theoretically – into any morphosyntactic matrix. A parallel observation has been made by Goyvaerts (1988: 233) in the context of Indoubil, an urban youth language of the Republic of Congo, which has a Lingala matrix in Kinshasa / Brazzaville and a Swahili matrix in Bukavu.

[17] This appropriative function primarily relates to French and only to a lesser degree to English. This is due to the dominant status of French in Cameroon on the one side and to the fact that a vernacularized variety of English already exists in the form of Pidgin English on the other side.