

Cameroonian slang

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



The Camfranglais is a Cameroonian slang born in the 70s which is primarily a mixture of borrowed words in French, English, pidgin English and local languages and some newly invented words by the Cameroonian youth. It is an urban language which reflects the way of life of young young cameroonian secondary school students and university students in cities such as Yaounde and Doala. It is an element of social cohesion since people indifferently of their social class, ethnicity and their speak Camfranglais.

It brings together all Cameroonians youth and allow them to express their Cameroonity. It is used by these pupils and students to communicate among themselves to the exclusion of non members. Its underlying structure is French-based and its lexical items are non standard as the words used are drawn from different variants. This mixture yields a language variant cherished by thieves, laborers, peddles, prisoners, prostitutes and people of the same educational level and social status.(Kouega, 2009)

Socio-Linguistic Background Of Cameroon

Cameroon has a special linguistic history typified by contacts of people and languages from various parts of the world. Since the period of the European trade on the African west coast in the 14th and 15th centuries till colonialism in the 19th and 20th centuries, the contact of several peoples (Portuguese ivory and spices merchants, European slave traders, European and American religious missionaries, and of course German, French and British colonialists) and languages has been attested in this country (Anchimbe, 2012). The linguistic outcomes of cultural and historic contacts in this State reveal that Cameroon is the only African country with three former colonial languages (German, French and English).

Located in the heart of Africa, Cameroon is often indicated as 'Africa in miniature' because its geo-climatic, ethnic-religious, cultural and linguistic diversity make the country almost a synthesis of what is found in other African countries (Siebetchu, 2012).

The language policy of Cameroon is based on its official bilingualism (French and English), i. e. a language policy whose aim is to unify the French part (eight regions) and the English part (two regions) of the country through linguistic communication. Ayafor (2005) underlines that in Cameroon, there is one approach to national integration and another to linguistic integration, both intended to be complementary to each other to achieve and sustain national unity in terms of territorial fusion and social cohesion through linguistic communication.

Actually, unlike for most of Eastern Africa countries with Swahili or for Senegal with Wolof, in Cameroon none of the indigenous languages have an official status nor national recognition. Although it is the African country with the largest number of languages after Nigeria, according to Ethnologue data (Lewis, 2009), Cameroon, with its 279 local languages and two official languages is the theatre of a language conflict due both to the 'rivalry' between local languages and the dominance of the two official languages. In fact, a very small percentage of the Cameroonian population is able to speak the two languages with functional fluency.

As in many post colonial African countries, we can observe the diglossic relationship between local and official languages where the latter are used in formal and informal domains. The sociolinguistic situation of Cameroon is

also characterized by the creation of three mixed languages deriving from the contact between local and official languages: Pidgin English, Camfranglais and Franfulfulde.

These simplified idioms derive not only from the fact that they (specifically pidgin English) are lingua franca for the communication between people speaking different languages but also because they are the result of a protest against the language policy almost exclusively oriented towards the two official languages. Moreover, these simplified idioms derived also from the lack of language education that does not always guarantee the same competence of the official languages.

For example, in some areas of Northern Cameroon, the majority of dropouts and failures in the early years of school are due to the lack of competence in French (Siebetchu, 2012: 178). It is important to observe that despite their status collocated in a lower situation compared to the official languages, simplified languages are used by to compose popular modern Cameroonian music.

- From the abolition of slavery and slave trade to the end of the first world war.
- From 1919-1960 (the Versailles treaty of July 1, 1919)
- From 1960-1972 (independence and re-unification)
- From 1972-present (Unification and the Republic of Cameroon)