

Slang and Colloquialism in Cameroon English Verbal Discourse

Napoleon Kang Epoge

Department of English

Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaounde

University of Yaounde I

PO Box 47, Yaounde, Cameroon

Tel: 2-377-792-6042

E-mail: mcepoge@yahoo.fr

Received: December 2, 2011 Accepted: December 7, 2011 Published: March 1, 2012

doi:10.5296/ijl.v4i1.1414

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v4i1.1414>

Abstract

The study investigates features of slang and colloquialism in Cameroon English verbal discourse which have been created through the following processes – coinage, semantic extension, clipping, reduplication, double subjects, and pidgin-induced structures. It observes that these features of Cameroon verbal discourse are a quintessential development for the identity of non-native varieties of English around the world. The study contributes to the production of feature supplements to the usage of contemporary English in non-native settings. It recommends the codification of this linguistic inventiveness, especially among the young and lively people, in quest of fresh, original, pungent expressions to rename ideas, actions and entities in Cameroon English. All these juvenile qualities combine to give free reign to the impulse to play with the language, making it creative and refreshing.

Keywords: Slang, Colloquialism, Cameroon english, Verbal discourse, Reduplication, Coinage, Double subject, Semantic extension, Clipping

1. Introduction

Languages change all the time irrespective of whether we are aware of this or not. For instance, all the computer and internet terminology which we use all the time now did not exist some twenty years ago, simply because *a browser* and *downloading* did not yet exist in people's lives, and *a mouse* meant a totally different kind of thing, a small grey animal and not a pointing and clicking device (Schneider 2011). Furthermore, the ability to speak two or more languages is extremely widespread or has even become a norm. So in many contexts it is normal for a language to exist side by side with one or more other languages in the region, or in the minds of multilingual individuals. Such languages are said to be in contact with each other, and, quite naturally, they influence each other in many ways. As a consequence of this contact, pattern-forming habits in the minds of speakers are taken over from one language context into another, and many of them become firmly integrated in a newly emerging linguistic system. This applies to the "New Englishes" of Africa and Asia, which tend to have been shaped to some extent by contact with the indigenous tongues of the region. This phenomenon enriches the expressive potential of English, like that of any other language. New sounds or newly adopted patterns allow for further means of expression in the recipient language.

Cameroon is a multilingual country wherein 286 indigenous languages co-exist side by side with two official languages (French and English) and four major lingua francas: Mongo Ewondo (spoken in the Centre and South regions where speakers of the Fang-Beti language group are found), Arab Choa (spoken in the Far North region), Fulfulde (spoken in the Adamawa and North regions) and Pidgin English (dominantly spoken in the South West, North West, West, and Littoral regions) (Chia 1983). As a result of this, linguistic borrowing, interference, code-switching, loan translation and other manifestations of language contact characterize this particularly dense multilingual situation. In fact, the languages mutually exert some influence on one another. Such influence may be from the official languages to the indigenous languages (Bitja'a Kody 1998), from the indigenous languages to official languages (Echu 1999), from the indigenous languages to Cameroon Pidgin English (Mbassi Manga 1973), from Cameroon Pidgin English to the official languages (Kouega, 1998), and from one official language to the other (Mbangwana 1999, Kouega, 2005).

2. The English Language in Cameroon

Although English in Cameroon has been functioning as an official language since October 1961, when British Cameroon reunited with French Cameroon leading to the renaming of the country as the Federal Republic of Cameroon, the presence of English in Cameroon can be traced as far back as 1916 when British became one of the administering authorities of the country. The British, who obtained one-fifth of the country, annexed their share to neighbouring Nigeria. In the new British territory, referred to as 'British Cameroon', English was not only taught in schools but was also used for administration throughout the colonial period.

In October 1961, English was logically adopted as one of the official languages of the country, not only because the linguistic diversity of the country did not permit the emergence of an

indigenous language likely to play the role of official language but also for reasons of national unity. English thus became the language of education, administration, politics, culture, the media, etc, and consequently the language of communication for an important component of the population. Because of its official status, government has been doing everything possible to promote its use. Most efforts towards getting Cameroonians to acquire the language are channelled through the school system. The language is taught in all secondary schools and institutions of higher learning in the country. It is the medium of instruction in all primary, secondary and higher institutions in the English-speaking North West and South West Regions. Furthermore, attempts have been made since the early 1980s to introduce its teaching in primary school in French-speaking regions through what has been termed “operation bilingualism”.

An examination of the situation of English in Cameroon today, reveals that the language enjoys a relatively high status in the increasing range of its users and uses. Consequently, Cameroon deserves a place among other countries in what is often referred to as “the English-speaking world”. Indeed, Cameroonians tend to speak English in slightly different ways and with varying degrees of fluency and accuracy, depending on what part of the country they come from and on the level and type of formal education they have received. Thus, English in Cameroon may be defined as a complex of both functionally and developmental determined varieties that can be described, in terms of use, as a lectal continuum which has, at its lower end, a “basilectal” variety (Pidgin English) and, at its upper end, an Educated English “acrolect”; and, according to competence, as involving various developmental continuums along each of which varying levels of proficiency in a given lectal variety may be identified.

In all English-speaking societies models are either “native” or “non-native” (Kachru 1983 a). The term model is used here to refer to a form that is generally acceptable to the users of a language. Consequently, a “native” model is one based on the rules of acceptability recognized and observed by native-speakers of English. Native models exist in non-native English situations when use of the language is so restricted or specialized that no local norms of usage have developed and users look up to native norms of usage to guide them in their use of the language. Non-native models exist in societies where English is more widely used and where the peculiarities of the contexts of use have given rise to local standards or to local norms of acceptability. With regard to this, Schneider (2011:2) holds that

English is no longer just ‘one language’; it comes in many different shapes and sizes, as it were. It is quite different in the many countries and localities where it has been adopted. To grasp this phenomenon linguists have come to talk of different “Englishes”.

English has thus become localized and indigenized in a great many different countries. It is not only viewed as a useful “international” language, but it fulfills important local functions. In doing so it has developed local forms and characteristics, so that not infrequently people enjoy using it in “their own” way. In many places local ways of speaking English have become a new home dialect which, like all local dialects, is used to express regional pride, a

sense of belonging to a place which finds expression through local culture, including language forms. One really interesting aspect about all of this is that this indigenization and nativization process of English in many countries, frequently former colonies in the British Empire, is a product of the very recent past and not primarily of their colonial heritage of centuries ago. It is only for the last few decades, quite a while after independence in many cases, that English has made such inroads into local cultures (Schneider 2011:3).

In the case of English in Cameroon, one can conveniently say that local norms of acceptability have developed. Mbassi-Manga (1976) points out that very few users of English in Cameroon ever had the opportunity of learning from native speakers of the language. The average user of English in Cameroon therefore speaks a variety of English which is strongly marked by the environment in terms of its lexis, especially at the idiomatic and collocational levels. This reveals that the variety of English spoken in Cameroon is marked with a discrete character of its own and is credited with the status of a distinct type, set apart from and essentially on equal terms with all other Englishes.

3. Slang and Colloquial Usage

Slang is an area of lexis in a permanent state of flux consisting of vivid and colourful words and phrases which characterize various social and professional groups, especially when these terms are used for in-group communication. Slang provides and reinforces social identity but it is also used in society at large to achieve an air of informality and relaxation (Gonzalez 1994). Anderson and Trudgill (1990:70) point out that, as slang is subject to change over time and from place to place, 'what is slang for one person, generation or situation may not be slang for another'. They go further to remark that 'the most important aspect of slang is that it is a language used below the level of stylistically neutral language usage (Anderson and Trudgill, 1990:69). In Trumble and Stevenson (2002), slang is described both as 'the special vocabulary and usage of a particular period, profession, social group' and as a 'language that is regarded as very or much below standard educated level. This definition of slang shows a tendency towards a sociological view of the phenomenon. This view is echoed by Eble (1996:11) who regards slang as 'an ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large'.

Thus, slang is broadly construed as language that speakers deliberately use to break with the standard language and to change the level of discourse in the direction of informality. It signals the speakers' intention to refuse conventions (Flexner 1960, Dumas and Lighter 1978) and their need to be fresh and startling in their expression, to ease social exchanges and induce friendliness, to reduce seriousness and avoid clichés, in brief, to enrich the language (Partridge 1947:288). As Mencken (1967:702) points out, there is 'a kind of linguistic exuberance' behind slang, 'an excess of word-making energy' that revives the standard language by introducing new words and novel meanings into its lexicon. It is used because there is the desire to secure increased vivacity and the sense of intimacy in the use of language (Mattiollo 2005). Consequently, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines slang as language of highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of educated standard speech,

and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense. In a related definition, it also describes slang as language of a low and vulgar type and the special vocabulary or phraseology of a particular calling or profession. This sums up the paradox slang. People look down on it, but can hardly avoid using it, for everyone has some calling or profession. Slang is therefore informal and often ephemeral linguistic forms. We all use our language in different ways, depending on the circumstances. Most often, we speak differently in formal contexts and in informal contexts. Especially when speaking informally, we often take pleasure in resorting to slang - informal but colourful words and expressions.

Slang expressions are usually introduced by the members of a particular social group; they may remain the property of that group and serve as a badge of group identity, or they may instead become much more widely known and used. The majority of slang forms have a comparatively short life but they can be very fashionable and picturesque. In certain cases, some of these slangs have become full-fledged words such as hijack, booze (alcoholic drink), streamline, lipstick, awesome, stardom. A drunk has variously said to be loaded, soused, fried, pickled, sozzled, pissed, blitzed, bombed, smashed or tired and emotional, or that he has had a skinful or is three sheets to the wind. It is healthy to point out here that Slang, the quintessence of colloquial speech, is easy enough to use but very hard to write about with the facile convincingness that a subject apparently so simple would, at first sight, seem to demand. But the simplest things are the hardest to define, certainly the hardest to discuss, for it is usually at *prima facie* only that their simplicity is what strikes one the most forcibly.

Colloquialism, on its part, is a word or phrase that is more commonly used in informal speech and writing. Consequently, colloquial speech refers to the total set of utterances in a familiar, informal context such as at home, at a place of relaxation or at the workplace. This informal type of speech is used among friends and others in situations where empathy, rapport or lack of social barriers is important. Colloquial speech is often marked by the use of slang or idioms and by other linguistic characteristics such as deletion of subject or auxiliaries (e.g. as in “Got the time?” instead of “Do you have the time?”) (Richards and Schmidt 2002:88).

For some people, slang is equivalent to “colloquial speech” but for others, it means “undesirable speech”. Usually, “colloquial speech” refers to a speech variety used in informal situations with colleagues, friends or relatives, and “slang” is used for a very informal speech variety which often serves as an “in-group” language for a particular set of people such as teenagers, army recruits, pop groups, etc.

As the foregoing discussion reveals, slang is the level of usage which is certainly below colloquialism. Willis (1973) thinks that the birth of slang comes from linguistic inventiveness especially among the young and lively people who are in quest of fresh, original, pungent expressions in order to rename ideas, actions and objects they feel strongly about. Slangs are usually witty and expressive (e.g. *tchop-broke-pot*, *bottom-power*, *water-yam*, *japanese-handbrake*, *peacemaker*, *boy-boy*, *faroteur*, *private part*, *nanga-boko*). In West Africa in general, and in Cameroon in particular, slang and colloquialism consist of vivid and colourful words, and phrases which characterize various social and professional groups. Consequently, slang and colloquialism in Cameroon English achieve an air of informality and

relaxation.

4. Data

The data for this study is obtained through recordings and field investigations over the past three years. The recordings involve mainly the informal conversations of secondary and university students as well as educated speakers of Cameroon English at different social events. Some of the data used in this work comes from a variety of radio and television programmes. With the assistance of some English language experts in the country and twenty postgraduate students, the present researcher identified impressive number of lexical items and syntactic features in the extemporaneous speech of the subjects, some of which had already been cited in past research works in Cameroon English (see Simo Bobda 1994, Kouega 2009, Kamtchueng 2011). The words and expressions thus identified are classified into their respective creative processes: reduplication, double subjects, coinage, compounding, semantic extension, clipping, and pidgin induced. Although some of these processes of lexical and syntactic inventiveness have been cited in some past research works, and may occur in other varieties of West African English or new Englishes (Kachru 1983, Platt et al 1984, Bamiro 1995, Wolf 2001, Igboanusi 2002b, 2006, Schneider 2009), the patterns and *raison d'être* of their use may be different.

It is healthy to point out here that the syntactic phenomena such as reduplication and double subjects in the present study are colloquial in nature. These syntactic phenomena are mostly used in Cameroon English in colloquial contexts and by both educated and less educated speakers of Cameroon English. Their colloquialism lies with the use of redundancy to achieve emphasis (See Simo Bobda 1994) or to create a feeling of intensity. Thus, colloquialism in this paper refers to the total set of utterances in a familiar, informal social context such as home, place of relaxation or workplace. This informal type of speech is used among friends and others in situations where empathy, rapport or lack of social barriers is important. It will not be erroneous to point out here that, colloquial speech is not necessarily non-prestige speech and should not be considered as substandard. Educated native speakers of a language normally use colloquial speech in informal situations with friends, fellow workers, and members of the family.

4.1 Reduplication

Reduplication means doubling of stem with or without a change in sound to express a morphosyntactic category. Simo Bobda (1994: 258) has identified three categories of words, which generally undergo the process of reduplication: numerals, intensifiers and quantifiers. And as Igboanusi (2002b) has observed, while the occurrence of a second numeral denotes 'each' (as in one-one, half-half), the reduplication of an intensifier or a quantifier may be for emphasis (as in many-many, now-now, before-before, fast-fast, fine-fine, slowly-slowly) or for pluralisation (as in big-big, small-small). Some of the examples found in Cameroon English are:

very-very: She is very-very pretty tonight. (She is very pretty tonight.)

true-true: Deborah told us a true-true story. (Deborah told us a true story.)

now-now: Do this work now-now. (Do this work immediately.)

many-many: We went to town today and saw many-many fine things.

small-small: Do you have small-small pepper? (Do you have small brand of pepper?)

Mary likes going out with small-small boys. (Mary likes dating younger boys.)

fine-fine: I have seen fine-fine things today.

three-three: we go to the village after three-three months. (We go to the village at three months interval.)

one-one: I bought one-one exercise book of 80 leaves and 60 leaves.

fast-fast: Brazilian players play football fast-fast. (for *very quickly*.)

4.2 Double Subjects

The use of double subjects in Cameroon English is another syntactic feature that exhibits colloquial use of language. This inventiveness in Cameroon English is to emphasize the subject.

We the children of Ajasco do not tell lies. (We do not tell lies.)

We the students of LMA will organize a welcome party. (The students of the English Department will organize a welcome party.)

The use of double subject may involve:

(i) demonstrative adjective + possessive adjective + noun + verb;

This your brother is a good guy. (This brother of yours is a good fellow.)

That my book is so dear to me. (That book of mine is very important to me.)

These your oranges are rotten. (These oranges of yours are rotten.)

In each of these structures, we notice that the possessive pronoun has been replaced by the possessive adjective with a novelty in structure. Three changes have taken place in each of these structures – the original possessive pronoun is replaced by a possessive adjective; the latter occurs right after the demonstrative adjective; and the preposition “of” is deleted.

ii) the use of a pronoun + a modifier.

We the students of Level Four will provide a cake for the party.

The colloquialism in this structure lies with the use of redundancy or repetition to achieve emphasis.

4.3 Coinage

Coinage (also known as neologism) is a new word or expression which has come into a

language. It is often difficult to pinpoint the exact year when a neologism appears in a language. Often neologisms are the result of the opening up of new areas of art, science or technology. For example, the field of computer science brought about a large range of neologisms such as user-friendly, software, floppy disk. Some of the examples of coined slang in Cameroon English are:

fox: a Form One (first year) student in secondary school.(e.g. *Foxes* in our school give a lot of headache.)

apollo: conjunctivitis. So named because it first appeared at the time of the Apollo 11 moonshot. (e.g. Mike has *Apollo*; his eyes are all red.)

aunty: term of respect used by children (younger person) to address adult women. (e.g. Joyce likes *aunty Rose* who teaches English.)

babe (also known as *chap*): girl (e.g. I like that *babe*. She is very beautiful.)

bamenda: a derogatory name for a person who behaves in a stupid way; a foolish person. (e.g. You will be making a mistake if you think that Bob is a *bamenda*.)

chewer: single man/woman with no companion of the opposite sex.

chief: term of address; used to show respect towards male friends. (e.g. How are you *chief*?)

faroteur: someone who throws money out lavishly for fame.

Fayman (also known as *feih-man*): someone who moves about defrauding people.

MBF: Married But Free. It is used to describe women who are married but still date other men.

nchinda: errand boy.

ngegereu: an albino

ngoa-ekete (also known as *ngoa*): The University of Yaounde I.(e.g. Mbende is a student of *ngoa-ekete*.)

OMG: This is an abbreviation which stands for 'Oh my God!'. It is used for exclamation.

sango/nyango/pa: honorifics and politeness markers. (e.g. *Pa* Jacob is always smiling.

Sango Pastor, you are welcome. *Nyango* pastor will arrive soon.)

settle: offer gratification of some form or another in order to win a favour.(e.g. You need to *settle* the person who handles your file for it to be treated in time.)

titulaire: a regular sexual partner.

4.4 Compounding

A compound word is a linguistic expression that consists of at least two free morphemes or morpheme constructions which functions as a single word. Structurally, various types of word classes are matched together to form new words

i) noun + noun

bottom power (it is made up of two English nouns ‘bottom’ and ‘power’): influence gained by a woman through sexual favours. (e.g. She succeeds well because of her *bottom power*.)

boy-boy: obsequious person. (e.g. I am not your *boy-boy*; so stop ordering me around.)

brain-box (it is made up of two English nouns ‘brain’ and ‘box’): an intelligent person.

Bushfaller (it is made up of an English noun ‘bush’ and a coined noun from the verb ‘to fall’ (*faller*)): someone who after some time abroad returns with money and uses it carelessly.

chicken-change: insignificant amount of money. (e.g. Could you imagine that I went on weekend and my boyfriend gave *chicken change*.)

congo meat: meat of the giant African land snail. (e.g. This boy is selling some juicy *congo meat*.)

water-yam: a weak person. (e.g. Don’t you know that Nicholas is *water yam*?)

four-one-nine (419): fraudster or cheat. (e.g. You have to be careful with all these *four-one-nine* boys who keep on promising you haven.)

ii) adjective + noun

big gun: a person who has political and financial influence. An important person in a community. (e.g. The *big guns* in our country are above the law.)

private-part: genitals.

low-waist (it is made up of an English adjective ‘low’ and noun ‘waist’): shorts, skirts and trousers that do not get to the waist.

slow boy (it is made up of an English adjective ‘slow’ and noun ‘boy’): snail.

senior service: senior ranks of the service .

iii) noun + verb

Ghana-must-go: fibre bag from Taiwan with zipper and tartan or other pattern used to transport goods (it came to being in the 1980s when Ghanaians were expelled from Nigeria and allegedly used these bags to transport their goods back home)

iv) adverb + noun

backside: This is a noun and it refers to the hip of a woman. (e.g. The *backside* of this *babe* is tantalising.)

v) verb + preposition

been-to: a person who returns to the country after a long stay overseas (e.g. My boyfriend finds fault with every local dish I serve him. I don't know whether *been-tos* always lose their taste of traditional dishes.)

vi) verb + noun

fall bush: to travel and live abroad (e.g. My *babe* has *fallen bush*.)

vii) verb + preposition + noun

should-in-case: a big lady's handbag which is usually carried along when there is a party. The handbag is also called *I have come to spend a night*. This name comes about as a result of the fact that ladies always have this handbag, which contains all their basic needs, whenever they visit their boyfriend with the intention of spending some days at the boyfriend's home).

4.5 Clipping

A clip is a short variant of a complex word. In 'head words,' the first part is used: lab(oratory), math(ematics). In 'end words,' the beginning of a word is dropped: (tele)phone, (air)plane. Some of the examples found in Cameroon English are:

Bonas: Bonamoussadi quarters in Yaounde where university students reside. (e.g.

My sister lives at *Bonas*.)

bike: motorbike (e.g. *A bike* is my means of transport.)

biz: business (e.g. I am going out for *biz*, bro.)

bro: brother.(e.g. I will see you tomorrow, *bro*.)

den: identity card.(e.g. Mary has left her *den* in my house.)

docky: documents. It refers mostly to forged official documents such as testimonials, birth certificates, marriage certificates etc. e.g.(*Bro*, have you heard that the police caught the *docky man* with my *docky*?)

k-town: a town in the South West Region of Cameroon known as Kumba town .(e.g. One needs to be careful with *K-town* boys.)

ngoa: The university of Yaounde I. (e.g. *Ngoa* is not an easy place.)

sis: sister. (e.g. *Sis*, how are you doing today?)

4.6 Semantic Extension

Semantic extension has to do with variation in the semantic range of a word. The trend in this regard is that of the extension of the semantic range of native English words wherein the words retain their English meanings but acquire additional ones not familiar in native English. The examples below fall in the register of slang and colloquialism in Cameroon English.

alhaji: technically any male who has been on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but often used as a title of respect, or as shorthand for a businessman of Muslim aspect.

andrew-marie-mbida: It is a name of one time politician in Cameroon (Andrew Marie Mbida), but often used to refer to something that is out of fashion. (Mirabel likes wearing *andrew-marie mbida*.)

bamenda (the name of the headquarters of the North West Region of Cameroon): a person who behaves in a stupid way; a foolish person.

bend skin: from the English verb ‘to bend’ and the noun ‘skin’. It is a *Motorcycle* used as a means of passenger transport in urban areas. This lexical item entered Cameroon English current usage in the early 1990s when the economic crisis intensified in Cameroon following a major political crisis in the country in 1992. The motorcycle became a major means of transport in urban areas like Douala when traditional means of transport such as the yellow taxi were forced by the radical opposition political parties to go on strike.

cassava farm: a part-time job for someone who has a full-time job. (e.g. No teacher can cope in Yaounde without a *cassava farm*.)

frog (a small tailless amphibious animal with smooth moist skin, webbed feet, and long back legs used for jumping): a francophone or French-speaking person.

gist (the essential point or meaning of something): to pass on recent news.

godfather (a person who, at a baptism ceremony, promises to help a new member of the religion, usually a child, in religious and moral matters): a mentor in the position of authority; a person, in a position of influence, who is able and ready to assist you.

japanese-handbrake (the handbrake of Japanese cars): a selfish or closed fist person. That is someone who holds his/her wallet tightly as the handbrake of a Japanese car.

match (a contest between opponents, especially a sports contest): a love-making instance.

peacemaker (someone who brings peace and reconciliation to others): male genital organs.

pillow (a rectangular cloth bag filled with soft material, such as feathers or artificial materials, used for resting your head on in bed): one’s spouse. (e.g. Do you know that Florence is the pillow of Michael?)

report card (a record of a child's performance at school over a specific period, prepared by the teachers and given to the child's parents): a person who reports everything to the authority.

screw (a piece of metal with a tapering threaded body and grooved head by which it is turned into something in order to fasten things): to make love. (e.g. Have you *screwed* that girl?)

small-thing (something of a relatively little size): a girlfriend. (e.g. Mirabel is my *small-thing*.)

to wash somebody: slander someone; to make public someone's dirty lenient.

to dash something to someone: to offer something to someone.

to chop money: to spend money.

4.7 Pidgin-induced slangs

These are words and expressions from Cameroon Pidgin English which are frequently used as slangs in Cameroon English.

bayam sellam: it simply designates a market woman who buys food products in the rural area and sells them immediately in the town or city. Besides being humorous in nature, these names are quite evocative and suggestive of the meanings attached to them.

cam-no-go: from the English words 'come', 'not' and 'go' (that which comes and refuses to go away). It refers to a persistent kind of skin infection (itchy rashes) caused by an animal parasite.

docta: medical doctor, a PhD holder, witchdoctor, and even quacks.

gnama gnama: (also written *nyama nyama*) small; person or thing of little value or importance. This word used both as a noun and as an adjective made its way into Cameroon English through oral usage.

jakass: (donkey) someone you are not on good terms with. It also means 'a carrier'.

mboma (also known as *sugar daddy*, *baby daddy*): a very old boyfriend of a young girl who provides almost all her needs.

mini-minor: a compound noun which refers to a young woman who has not yet attained puberty; very young prostitute. This expression is mainly used in oral contexts.

mougou: means 'a good for nothing person' or 'a weakling'. Mainly used by young people.

nanga-boko: a girl who usually sleeps out of her room.

remé: This word is a noun and refers to one's mother or an aged woman.

repé: It is a noun and refers to one's father or an aged man.

tchoko: This word is a noun and a verb. As a noun it means 'bribe' and as a verb it means 'to bribe'.

tchop-broke-pot: (also written *tchop brook pot*) from the English words 'chop', 'broke' and 'pot'. It refers to a glutton or an extravagant person. *tchop -broke-pot* (where *tchop* means 'to eat', *broke* means 'to break' and *pot* means 'pot') alludes to someone who eats and breaks his/her pots without giving any thought to the future. In short it refers to an extravagant person, one that is to a large extent responsible for the political and economic ruin of his country.

5. Semantic and Social Value of Slang in Cameroon English

Slang items in Cameroon English are informal synonyms of the English equivalents (e.g. slang *boy-boy*, SBE *obsequious person*; slang *babe*, SBE *girl*; slang *bamenda*, SBE *imbecile*; slang *ngegereu*: SBE *albino*; slang *slow boy*, SBE *snail*). Others come up to fill in a linguistic gap. Consider, for example, the slang *tchop-broke-pot* which refers to an extravagant person, one that is to a large extent responsible for the political and economic ruin of his country. There is no Cameroon English equivalent that can express the same concept. Furthermore, slang in Cameroon English enriches the language with vocabulary and phraseology from Cameroon indigenous languages (such as *nchinda* 'errand boy' *ngundu* 'work without pay'), and the French language *boulot* ('a piece of job'). It coins new derogatory expressions such as *bamenda*, (a foolish person), *tchop-broke-pot* (an extravagant person), *frog* (a French-speaking person), *ngegereu* (an albino). These are words, expressions, and usages that are casual, vivid and racy.

Thus, the vocabulary of slang in Cameroon English enriches the language with novel meanings. It establishes new extra senses, most of which is derived from figurative language; for example, *tchop-broke-pot*. This expression refers to a glutton or an extravagant person. Someone, who is to a large extent, responsible for the political and economic ruin of his country. In some instances an additional sense is more arbitrary given to standard words: *report card* is a curious slang name for 'someone who reports everything to the authority'; *peacemaker* for 'male genital organs', *private part* for 'genitals', *to screw* 'to make love', *a match* 'a love-making instance', *japanese-hanbrake* 'a selfish person', *small-thing* 'a girlfriend'. Furthermore, the vocabulary of slang in Cameroon English changes by the extension of existing forms to new meanings. Sometimes these are simply more specific meanings of existing words becoming part of in-group or technical vocabulary. Metaphoric extension is the cause of many new meanings such as *andrew-marie-mbida* for 'something that is out of fashion', *aunty* for 'an adult woman', *apollo* for 'conjunctivitis', *faroteur* for 'someone who throws money out lavishly for fame' *gist* for 'to pass on new information', *cassava farm* for 'a part-time job'. Euphemism is also frequent at associating novel meanings (for example, *peacemaker* for 'male genital organs', *private part* for 'the genitals', *a match* for 'a love-making instance', *to screw* for 'to make love' and *pillow* for 'one's spouse') and avoiding linguistic taboos.

At the sociolinguistic level, it is worthwhile noting that English is generally used to create fun in humorous situations. The humorous nature of Cameroon English slang (e.g. *tchop-broke-pot*, *frog*, *japanese-handbrake*, *slow-boy*, *water-yam*, *to screw*, *match*) makes it more lively and suitable for the expression of the feelings of the speakers. For instance, the slang *tchop-broke-pot* (where *tchop* means 'to eat', *broke* means 'to break' and *pot* means 'pot') has a macabre sense of humour in that one wilfully breaks the only pot he has without giving any thought to the future. Also, the slang *frog* (a French-speaking person) is humorous in the sense that the noisiness of French-speakers is likened to the disturbing nature of the noise frogs produce when they are in a pond.

Of all social groups in Cameroon, the youths and fashionable people are the most prone to the use and renovation of slang and unconventional language. They exhibit great social dynamism and are receptive to changes in fashion: in clothes, look, style, and also in speech. Consequently, Slang in Cameroon English is language that speakers use to show their belonging to a youthful social group and establish solidarity or intimacy with other group members. It is also used to strengthen the bonds within their group; keeping the older generation and non-members of their group at distance. Thus, slang is used to reinforce group cohesiveness, keeping insiders together and outsiders out. Aspects such as *frog* (francophone), *nga* (a girl), *andrew-marie-mbida* (something out of fashion), *to screw* (to make love), *match* (instance of love-making), *ngeme* (poverty), *small-thing* (girlfriend), *nanga-boko* (a girl who usually sleeps out of her room), *tchoko* (bride), *gist* (to pass on recent information), *ngoa* (The University of Yaounde I), *den* (identity card), *should-in- case* (a big lady's handbag), *titulaire* (a regular sexual partner), *faroteur* (someone who throws money out lavishly for fame), *Bushfaller* (someone who after some time abroad returns with money and uses it carelessly), *fayman* (someone who moves about defrauding people) etc are considered related to young and fashionable people and are hardly understood by the outsiders. It also shows that the user is in tune with the times. This portrays that slang in Cameroon English carries a sense of being modern and fashionable. When people speak they do not only communicate a message, but also give information about who they believe they are i.e. they create their own identity.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined slang and colloquialism in Cameroon English verbal discourse. The lexical items and syntactic phenomena which make up slang and colloquial expressions in Cameroon English are formed through syntactic innovative processes such as reduplication and double subjects, and through lexical innovation processes such as neologism, compounding, clipping, semantic extension and pidgin induced slangs. At the sociolinguistic level, we notice that the humorous nature of Cameroon English slang and colloquialism make it more lively and suitable for the expression of the feelings of the speakers. The list of words and expressions given above demonstrate characteristically youth and fashionable people's qualities such as the disregard for convention, a tendency to regard people and the accepted attitudes with contempt or condescension, in order to give free reign to the impulse to play with language, making it creative and refreshing.

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