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The use of Camfranglais in the Italian migration context

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is nearly ten years since the concept of *lingue immigrate* (Bagna et al., 2003), was formulated. To date, immigrant minority languages are poorly investigated in Italy. Actually, when referring to applied linguistics in the Italian context, research tends to focus on Italian language learning and acquisition by immigrants but it does not take into consideration contact situations between Italian and Immigrant languages. The linguistic mapping of these languages (Bagna, Barni, Siebetcheu, 2004; Bagna, Barni, 2005; Bagna; Barni, Vedovelli, 2007) so far undertaken empowers us to consider them as belonging to a linguistic superdiversity in Italy (Barni, Vedovelli 2009). Consequently, rather than being an impediment, immigrant languages shall enrich research in this area of study, without disregarding the complexity at both individual and collective levels. Bagna, Machetti and Vedovelli (2003) distinguish *Immigrant languages* from *Migrant languages*. For these authors, unlike *Migrant languages* which are languages passing through, *Immigrant languages* are used by immigrant groups that are able to leave their mark on the linguistic contact in the host community. A clear example of such immigrant language is called *Camfranglais*, an urban variety that stems from a mixture of French, English, Pidgin English and Cameroonian local languages (Ntsobé et al., 2008).

On the basis of this backdrop, we present a case study started in 2008 across various Italian cities that focuses on the outcome of the interaction between Italian and *Camfranglais*. Whereas superdiversity is characterized by a tremendous increase in the categories of immigrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration (Blommaert, Rampton, 2011), the research aims at analyzing the use of *Camfranglais* by Cameroonian students, workers and families that have settled in Italy. We show that the introduction of Italian in *Camfranglais* has given way to the emergence of a new variety that we have called *Camfranglitalien* (Siebetcheu, 2011a; Machetti, Siebetcheu *forth.*).

The approach adopted, in line with linguistic superdiversity theoretical background in the Italian context (Barni, Vedovelli, 2009), will be accompanied by a linguistic analysis aiming at describing the most significant linguistic phenomena in relation to the contact between Italian and *Camfranglais*. The number of Cameroonians speaking *camfranglais* in Italy, the uses, increasingly large and visible, of this variety, the consequent widening of the contexts in which it is used, the extension of such use, even for different groups of speakers by age and sex, represent factors that make it legitimate to classify *camfranglais* not just as an immigrant language, but as a superdiverse vernacular within which the presence of Italian is not merely related to the loan word function or *code-switching* (Auer, 1999; Auer and Wei, 2007). Meeuwis and Blommaert (1998: 77), dealing with Congolese immigrants in Belgium, observed that: “*code-switching speakers are not necessarily speakers who would be capable of producing monolingual speech in the languages used in code-switching*”.

We further explore the attitudes and language choices of Cameroonians living in Italy within the new media (social network, skype, email, etc) as well as the linguistic perceptions and communicability hypothesis in this idiom by *Camfranglais* speakers living in Cameroon. In this context, the *Camfranglais* spoken in Italy is used with the advantage of the communicative spontaneity in a virtual social environment. The corpora we will analyze, based on oral and written data, therefore reveal the complexity of *Camfranglais*, unlike the frequent cases of language contact.

Before illustrating the dynamic of this superdiverse variety, we briefly present the sociolinguistic framework of Cameroon and the linguistic repertoire of Cameroonian Immigrants in Italy which will help us to understand the nature and the evolution and the role of *Camfranglais* in Italy.

2. SOCIOLINGUISTIC 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 (Siebetcheu, 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 (Siebetcheu, 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.

3. CAMFRANGLAIS: HISTORY, EVOLUTION, FEATURES

Camfranglais is a "*parler mixte issu du mélange du français, de l'anglais, des langues nationales et même du pidgin [...] et diverses formes de l'argot étudiantin*" (Tabi Manga 2000: 167-168) documented since 1970 in the city of Douala (the economic capital of Cameroon) even if scholars began to study it from 1980 (Echu 2008: 41). This hybrid language, consisting of a mixture of French (the dominant language), English and many Cameroonian local language, had been indicated by different words or expressions. One of the first study relates to this hybrid language called it *Français* (Ze Amvela, 1983) because of the main presence of French and English in this idiom. After many years some people and some scholars continue to use this expression. Ayafor (2005:123) considers this *Français* as a stigmatized metropolitan code popular among the youth. Tiayon Lebokou (1985) called this specific Cameroonian way of speaking *Camspeak*. (Echu 2008: 41) recalling another expression used in early period in which this idiom was studied: *Français macro*. This last term stands for French as a language of extortion. In fact, this slang was used by smugglers who wanted to evade the attention of customs officers (Essengue

1998: 22). Valdman (2000) also considers this idiom as a *parler branché*, i.e. a way of speaking influenced by the modern life. All these terms and expressions will quickly move over to *Camfranglais*, coined by Francophone Cameroonian researchers. The prefix *Cam-* followed by *Franglais* stands for Cameroonian local languages as well as youth slang and foreign languages taught at school.

Because of the complexity of the sociolinguistic framework in which *Camfranglais* was created, it is still difficult to indicate a single and shared nature of this variety. Echu (2008a: 41-42) recalls some attributions in regards to this mosaic language: “argot” [slang], “pidgin”, “jargon”, “sabir”. To these terms we also add “parler mixte” [mixed language] (Tabi Manga 2000: 167) and even a “dialecte du français” [French dialect] (Mbah Onana 1997). However, it must be remembered that all of these attributions illustrate the many identities of the *Camfranglais*. Boyer (2010: 9-12) tries to describe the framework to which this hybrid language belongs :

Languages that nowadays could be qualified as mixed idioms corresponding to several manifestations of integrated heterogeneity generated by bi- or multilingual speech, interferences, thus transcodic markers (calques, loanwords, etc.) and new codification phenomena based on a self-arranged linguistic situation which cannot be considered just as a diatopic or distratic matter but essentially as an interlectal variety. Therefore, they are not authentic linguistic systems, as creole languages, but sets whose epilinguistic discourses (normal and others) illustrate their peculiarity and through which various characteristics (artistic, mediatic...).

If we want to describe the evolution of *Camfranglais* from its origin to the present time, we can say that from the prohibited, stigmatized, scientifically neglected idiom, spoken by illiterate people (specifically men), this language is today widely studied from linguistic and sociolinguistic point of view, spoken in Cameroon and abroad, by speakers (men and women) perfectly literate and belonging to different social classes. Today *camfranglais* is no longer exclusively a crook and ghetto language, but it is also spoken in school campuses, on radio, in homes, on the street, in meeting places, in professional contexts and even used for advertisements.

Concerning the function of *Camfranglais*, Tabi Manga (2000:167) considers it as a slang which excludes topics of conversation linked to serious matters and that seems to remain exclusively circumscribed on a playful style. Based on these considerations, we could identify at least five communicative functions associated with the use of *Camfranglais*:

- codification, opposition to official languages;
- identification and expression of the sense of belonging in a specific group;
- integration in a specific context of use (markets, ghetto, etc.);
- independence from standard languages to freely enhance linguistic creativity;
- playfully, to entertain interlocutors.

What has been shown here clearly reveals that in over forty years, the *Camfranglais* speaker identikit has changed in term of gender, age, social class, contexts, countries and communicative functions. Significant changes over time have also covered the lexicon, in reference to the contact with the global and virtual world, as well as the communication channel: after radio and newspapers, *Camfranglais* is now widespread in advertising signs (Figure 1) and, as we will discuss below, in the social network.

Figure 1. Advertisement board in Camfranglais (Dschang – Cameroon).



On a linguistic level, Biloa (2008:93) observes that "relexification" represents the most important strategy of creation and expansion of Camfranglais vocabulary, consisting in "*l'incorporation et en l'assimilation des mots issus des langues identitaires camerounaises par le camfranglais*". The same author adds that the lexical creation, also linked to morphological phenomena such as onomatopoeia, derivations, compositions, abbreviations, reduplications and inversions, constitutes a fundamental element in the structure of Camfranglais.

What has been illustrated here refers for the most part to Camfranglais used in Cameroon. However, in more recent years, the use of this variety has begun to spread beyond the boundaries of Cameroon, specifically in countries with a strong presence of Cameroonian immigrant: France, Great Britain, United State of America, Germany and Italy. At King's College of London, Constance Mbassi Manga is doing a PhD research on Camfranglais spoken in Paris, London and Louisiana. As for the use of Camfranglais in Germany, we can mention the work of Hecker (2009) that analyzes the linguistic habits of Cameroonian immigrants who speak Camfranglais mixing it with German words and structures.

4. CAMEROONIAN IMMIGRATION IN ITALY: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

After almost twenty years of immigration, Cameroonian citizens residing in Italy are 11.705 according to the *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2012* report. Cameroon is ranked 1st amongst foreign immigrants from Central and Southern Africa in terms of the number of residents and 43th considering all the foreign countries present in Italy. Over 97% of the Cameroonian population is concentrated in the Central-North regions of Italy (Siebetcheu 2011b: 48-49). In 2011, the first four types of visas issued by the Italian Embassy in Cameroon were: Tourism, Studies, Business and Family reunion. The long stays that mainly influence the Italian sociolinguistic framework are those related to studies, family reunion and work because they guarantee a permanent settlement in the territory through an average or long term migration planning (Siebetcheu, 2012).

Cameroonian immigration in Italy is the result of a more selective migration policy because it is mainly based on intellectual reasons. Each year about 350-400 Cameroonian students leave their country to pursue their academic career in Italy. After two decades of intellectual immigration about 5.000 young Cameroonian enrolled in the Italian Universities. In 2012, Cameroon was ranked fourth in

the number of foreign students in Italy, after Romania, Albania and China. If the fourth position of Cameroon is due to the great motivation for studies, the position of the first three countries depends on the geographic proximity (Albania), the free movement in the EU (Romania) and the cultural cooperation agreement (China, with the Marco Polo and Turandot Projects) (Siebetcheu, forthcoming). The number of Cameroonian students in Italy, who make up almost half of all Cameroonian immigrants, has tripled in the past years passing from 778 enrolments in the academic year 2003/2004 to 2.327 in 2010/2011 (Siebetcheu, 2011b).

Concerning the area of origin, about 70-80% of Cameroonians living in Italy come from the Bamiléké ethnic group, collocated in the French-speaking area, and therefore they speak Bamiléké languages. According to a study conducted in the city of Siena (Siebetcheu, 2012), but also confirmed by other ongoing investigations in other Italian cities, the linguistic repertoire of immigrants in Italy is composed of many languages:

- **French:** in fact the overwhelming majority of Cameroonians resident in Italy in fact belong to the French-speaking part of the country, although many of the respondents are uncertain whether French is their mother tongue or not, because they also speak local languages;
- **English:** the level of competence in this language is generally very low, considering the fact that around 90% of Cameroonian immigrants do not come from the English-speaking area. Most Cameroonians register in Italian universities with A2-B1 English level of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages.
- **Italian:** In studying the Camfranglais spoken in Italy, it is advisable to stress that Cameroonian students, the main speakers of this idiom, come to Italy with a **B1.2** Italian level B2, recognized by the Common European Framework of Reference for languages as “independent user” (Council of Europe 1996: 23) level that allows foreign students to be admitted to Italian universities. Therefore, the *Camfranglitalien*, fruit of the contact between Camfranglais and Italian, that we are talking about are not used by illiterate speakers or beginners in Italian (Siebetcheu, forthcoming).
- **Local languages:** almost all the informants claim that they do not know how to read and/or write their local languages (most of them bamiléké languages: Fèfè, Medumba, Ghomala, Yemba and Ngomba) This situation is due to the fact that only a few local languages have started a process of standardization¹;
- **Pidgin English and Camfranglais:** Some Cameroonians claim to speak these languages better than English, probably because they seem more confident in their abilities in these hybrid languages than in English. We can also add that grammar errors and poor lexicon in these varieties do not constitute a problem for the communication, unlike for Standard English;
- **Italian dialects:** Cameroonians living in Italy for many years or married **to with** Italian native speakers claim to know an Italian dialect -and to use it though not being able to write to read it.

5. CAMFRANGLAIS IN THE ITALIAN MIGRATION CONTEXT

While in Cameroon Camfranglais is considered as a symbol of the loss of cultural identity among the Cameroonian youth (Sol 2010: 36), in Italy it constitutes the expression and the regaining of sociocultural and identity values. Through the use of Camfranglais, we observe a strong awareness as regards to the national and cultural origin of Cameroonians. Camfranglais, no longer considered with the negative connotation within the bounds of the “*bâtardise ethnolinguistique*” (Boyer 2010:14), is looked to as a tool and an ambassador of the Cameroonian plurilinguistic identity in Italy. Actually, if in Cameroon Camfranglais speakers are aware that the idiom they use is a mixture of many languages, in Italy it is considered as a unique idiom in contact with the Italian language. We therefore consider this contact as “the result of a double diglossic conflict that occurred in two diverse areas and in two different periods: the first one through the dominion of French and English, ex colonial languages, towards the Cameroonian languages and the second one through the influence of Italian, language of

¹ Recently the Cameroonian Government undertook the process of introducing some local languages in the secondary school syllabus.

the immigration country, towards a Cameroonian immigrant language” (Siebetchu, forthcoming). Actually, the language contact and mixture processes are oriented towards the language of the new country or towards the Italian language, thus forming a crucial knot that does not only concern itself, as the subject of *migration linguistics*, but that requires a multi-level detailed analysis, embroiling the themes of connection between language and society (Vedovelli 2011:152).

6. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

We present in this work the first results of an ongoing research which started in 2009. To date, the research has already involved 195 informants, distributed in three different cities (Perugia, Modena, Siena), selected also in relation to the importance of Cameroonian immigrants in these cities. Perugia, with 470 Cameroonian immigrants, is the city with the highest number of Cameroonians and in this city Cameroon is the second African country with the highest number of immigrants after Morocco. In Modena, where Cameroonian immigrants are 236, Cameroon is the 7th country with greatest number of African immigrant and in Siena Cameroon is the first African country with its 121 residents. In a first phase, which started in 2009 (Tchamen 2010), the study involved 130 informants, mostly students, but also workers and families (Modena: 69 informants, Perugia: 29 informants, Siena: 32 informants). The second phase of the survey, conducted in 2011, involved 65 informants, all residents in the city of Siena, involving 40 students and 25 families (Siebetchu 2012). The data collection has been done through audio-recorded interview protocols (for students and workers) and questionnaires (for families). In more than one case, the informants were asked to write some statements in Camfranglais, that gave us the possibility to create a corpus of written camfranglais, although sizes are much smaller than the corpus of speech. The corpus we analyzed in this work is therefore the combination of written and oral data, both recorded and transcribed. Given the results of previous investigations and having evaluated the problems that emerged, we also collected data from hidden audio-recorders without the speaker’s knowledge. In this way, even those who in the past had shown restriction to making a statement because of a general linguistic insecurity, contributed to the research. The choice of informants was made without filters, i.e. based on their availability.

7. SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

The idea in this section is to design a map of the main sociolinguistic features of Camfranglais in terms of speakers, contexts of use and communicative themes. The focus will be on the declarations of use, attitudes and language skills of informants, with a particular interest for Camfranglais used in contexts of social interaction. This part of the analysis will also be useful to develop a first reflection of the level of individual linguistic superdiversity (Barni, Vedovelli 2009: 41) among informants, showing that their linguistic competence is not only a multiple competence characterized by the ability of a “clear code switching from one language to another [...] through an idiomatic territory marked by contact between multiple languages and in which these languages do not show any fear to manage the idiom in terms of mixing or overlapping” (Barni, Vedovelli 2009, op cit.)

7.1. SPEAKERS

Camfranglais speakers in Italy are both young people and adults, either students or workers. Our informants come from many social backgrounds: working-class, drivers, bricklayers, dishwashers, chefs assistant, hotel receptionists, watchmen, cleaners but also bank clerks, teachers, engineers, pharmacists, doctors and researchers. Camfranglais is therefore used without feeling ashamed but with pride and patriotism. This idiom is not considered to be the language of crooks or those who live on the fringes of society, but is spoken by well-integrated Cameroonian citizens.

With regard to the gender of Camfranglais speakers, our study confirms, as observed in Cameroon (Echu 2008a: 50), that men use more frequently Camfranglais than women. Actually, the women’s Camfranglais production is limited also because the latter are not often present in the contexts

where Camfranglais is frequently spoken. Nevertheless, with the migration reality which generally incites immigrants to aggregate, men join women, in the residences halls, cafeterias, etc., and are encouraged to use Camfranglais. It is important to point out that the women's Camfranglais competence also depends on the context in which they grew up in Cameroon. As Siebetcheu (forthcoming) has already demonstrated, the examples (a) and (b) show that women's Camfranglais seems simpler, with few neologisms, few multilingual codes, easier to understand even for non Camfranglais speakers, and are generally composed of French and Italian, except with the inclusion of some English and Pidgin English frequently used words:

(a) **PICCOLA** comment tu vas?²
'How are you girl?'

(b) Je suis allée à la **QUESTURA** ce matin
'I went to the police station this morning'

As regards to the age of the informants, our research has led to identified speakers aged between 18 and 40 years. Many of the respondents claim that they do not use Camfranglais with their children, although during our surveys it was possible to observe how children were constantly exposed to the use of Camfranglais, thereby developing at least a good level of receptive competence. The speakers' age is important to analyze in relation to frequency and to the contexts of use of this variety. Even in Italy, Camfranglais is spoken by youth and young adults, due to the frequency of certain communicative contexts: study, recreation and leisure contexts. Professional and family responsibilities are therefore, at the moment, the main reasons that could gradually limit the use of Camfranglais by adults.

7.2 CONTEXTS

The contexts in which Camfranglais is used in Italy are mainly in informal areas, as in Cameroon. However, if in Cameroon urban areas are the best geographic spaces of the Camfranglais speakers (Echu 2008: 51) and although our research confirms this idea, it is necessary to stress that in Italy Camfranglais is also used in the countryside. For instance, for many years the city of Siena was not the principal place where Camfranglais was used but Monteroni d'Arbia, a locality of about 9 thousand inhabitants located approximately 13 km south-east of Siena. Apart from being the locality with biggest number of Cameroonian workers, it was also the place where many activities of the Cameroonian community were organized: football matches, association meetings, etc (Siebetcheu, forthcoming).

Specifically, the main places in which Camfranglais is used in Italy are: cafeterias, student residences, football stadiums and on the street (Siebetcheu, forthcoming). Camfranglais is also used during Cameroonian cultural and entertainment activities. The examples (c) and (d) illustrate the two most recurring Italian words (*mensa* and *casa*) appearing in Camfranglitalien and revealing two main contexts it is used: cafeterias and student residences.

c) Tu **go** à la **MENSA**?
'Are you going to the cafeteria'

d) On se **see** à la **CASA**
'See you at the residence hall'

²In order to distinguish the different languages used in the Camfranglais examples quoted in the text, we used the following characters: in bold and capital letter (Italian); normal and minuscule (French); in bold and minuscule (English); capital letter (Pidgin English); in bold and cursive (Cameroonian local languages); cursive (abbreviation); underlining (ending according to the French structure on a loan verb from another language).

Siebetcheu (forthcoming) observes that according to accounts given by young couples with children, 46% of the informants declare to use Camfranglais sometimes at home, with friends and to a lesser degree between husbands with their wives, but not with their children. This attitude reveals the awareness and / or the conviction of the relatives that Camfranglais is a hybrid language indicated only for particular speakers, to be used in a determined age and context. In any case, if Camfranglais is used at home, children are certainly exposed to this variety. Recent surveys (Tchamen 2010) have shown that Cameroonian children growing up in families where Camfranglais is used do not declare this variety among the languages of their repertoire. However this situation does not exclude that, these children are not immersed in a process of passive learning of Camfranglais, which could be expanded quantitatively and qualitatively with time.

7.3 COMUNICATIVE SITUATION

The analysis of the data reveals, as observed also by Siebetcheu (forthcoming), that communicative situations used more frequently by Camfranglais speakers are: love relationships, entertainment, sports, especially football, fashion, money, study (for students), work experience (for workers), the socio-political and economic situation in Cameroon, Italy and the world. It is extremely difficult to establish the most frequent communicative situation in a given conversation for at least two reasons: Camfranglais speakers can get through many subjects in the same conversation; the communicative situations could vary with the contexts of use and in relation to time. For example, during the World Cup or the African Cup of Nations, the main communicative situation is football and during the election period, politics is without doubt the main theme in conversations. The camfranglais in these cases is used to express support and appreciation, but also to criticize. Examples e) and f) are respectively related to the study and football.

e) Si le prof là MIMBA qu'il peut me **BOCCIARE** il se trompe
 'If this professor think that he will fail this exam he wrong'

f) J'ai vu même hier mon *prof* qui est **go** sur la **GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT** et je ne **know**
 pas si on voit les matchs là bas
 'Yesterday I even saw my professor when he was visiting the Gazzetta dello sport website; I do not know if it is possible to watch football matches in that website'

8. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

The aim of this section is to propose some morpho-syntactic and lexical phenomena characterizing the structure of Camfranglais spoken in Italy. Some of these phenomena have been already mentioned in other researches. We can remember for instance the works of Tabi Manga (2000), Féral (2006, 2007), Ntsobé et al. (2008), Queffélec (2008, 2009), Machetti and Siebetcheu (forthcoming), Siebetcheu (forthcoming). The analysis takes into account, as explained above, the data from a corpus of spoken, recorded and subsequently transcribed text, about two hours of speech, and a written corpus, of a much smaller size than the first. Despite the smaller size of the latter, we believe that from this corpus it is possible to obtain useful indications for a possible evolution of this variety, for example in relation to the construction of a spelling system (Machetti and Siebetcheu, in preparation).

8.1 MORPHOSYNTAX

Tabi Manga (2000:168) observes that Camfranglais is characterized by an important simplification of the structures, grammatical forms and an abundant production of neologisms. Fosso (1999: 181), illustrates that "*dans le phénomène Camfranglais, c'est la phrase française qui devient l'espace, le cadre des occurrences de quelques vocale anglais, camerounais ou autres*". These phenomena are also visible in the

Camfranglais spoken in Italy but, as we shall see, the introduction of Italian in this variety does not always equate to the mere presence of loan words or transfer showing features no longer linked to the occasional contact between the different systems, but the result of their genuine integration.

Despite the presence of many languages in Camfranglais, its morpho-syntactic structure remains essentially based on French. Actually, in the Camfranglais structure, the French sentence becomes the space within which some occurrences from English, Cameroonian languages, or some other languages can be set (Fosso 1999: 181). We propose here a macro-classification and examples of the most frequent phenomena that we can also see in Siebetcheu (2012; forthcoming), concerning Camfranglitalien morpho-syntax:

- *Use of English, Pidgin English and Cameroonian local languages verbs*

In the examples (g) and (h) the verbs ‘to think’ and ‘to go’ are respectively conjugated according to the French grammar (first person singular in the imperfect for the first verb and first person plural in the present for the second verb) becoming genuine neologisms. English, which is the second important language of Camfranglais spoken in Cameroon, after French, is contending this position with Italian in the Camfranglais spoken in Italy.

(g) **APPUNTO** je **thinkais** même à cela
 ‘Exactly, I was just thinking about that’

(h) Gars **goyons** A **MENSA**
 ‘Guys, let’s go to the cafeteria’

Examples (i) and (j) illustrate two Pidgin English and synonym verbs: *tchop* and *nack*.

(i) On va **go** TCHOP la **PIZZA**
 ‘We are going to eat some pizza’

(j) On **go** NACK **COLAZIONE** où?
 ‘Where are we going to breakfast?’

Camfranglais spoken in Italy also contains Cameroonian local language verbs. The example (k) is a case of basaa language.

(k) Tu peux **bolè** à la **MENSA** tu viens après?
 ‘Can you join me when you leave the cafeteria?’

- *Use of Italian verbs*

The example (l) illustrates a case of Italian verb with French infinitive.

(l) Je dois **COMPILER** cette fiche
 ‘I have to fill out this form’

The example (e) illustrates a case of Italian verb maintaining its origin form.

Concerning the function of those uses, which we will discuss specifically in the next section, it is extremely difficult propose an analysis model to categorize code switching within which the insertion of Italian is increasingly acquiring traits of stability. On theoretical and methodological paradigms applied to the analysis of code switching we remember the work of Auer but also Guerini (2006) who worked on Ghanaian language habits in Italy.

8.2 LEXICON

In our corpus, the use of Italian words is particularly significant, strongly linked to the context of use and to the communicative needs. The frequency of these words in our corpus is not yet very consistent but what is interesting is definitely the degree of dispersion of Italian terms in communicative interactions in this variety. Italian words and expressions are in fact present in the conversations recorded in a plurality of contexts, as a demonstration of the fact that in most cases they are not only simple loan words, with a merely referential function. On the contrary, the use of words and phrases in Italian language could be perfectly integrated in the mixture of codes by which Camfranglais is composed and in most cases could have a pragmatic function, essential for the effectiveness of communication, not exercisable by words issued from Camfranglais traditional language.

As noted in Siebetcheu (forthcoming), one of the most frequently used words in conversations between Camfranglais speakers is *casa*, which, depending on the context of utterance, assume the meaning of 'social housing' or 'hall of residence'. Observing examples (m) and (n), the impression we have is not to be in front of a mere loan, but in front of a term used to refer to a component of connotative meaning that only this term is capable of conveying.

(m) On t'a GUI la **CASA**?
'Have you been admitted to the residence hall?'

(n) Je te **wait** à la **CASA**
'I'll be waiting for you at the residence hall'

When the use of the generic *casa* is replaced by *casa popolare*, as in the example (o), the function could seem more likely to emphasize the message content, also through the resumption of the term in more points of conversation. It is a strategy which could suggest to a transfer with anaphoric function (Guerrini, 2006:573), which certainly increases the degree of cohesion of the interaction in which the word occurs.

(o) **LA GUARDIA DI FINANZA** a arrêté 1500 personnes qui ont fait les faux trucs pour *djourn* dans **LA CASA POPOLARE**
'The financial police arrested 1500 persons who made false declarations to get public housing'

Furthermore, the following aspects are highlighted:

-Terms strongly linked to modernity, such as *bancomat* (cash dispenser)

(p) Je **go take** les DO dans le **BANCOMAT**
'I'm going to get some money from the cash dispenser'

- Words referring to objects, such as *lavatrice* (washing machine) and *lavastavoglie* (dishwasher) used only by few people in Cameroon.

(q) Je **go put** les habits dans la **LAVATRICE**
'I'm going to do the laundry in the washing machine'

- Terms widely used in the bureaucratic language as *reddito* (income) and *mutuo* (mortgage loan).

(r) Qui va **go do** les **REDITTO A ROMA**?
'Who is supposed to prepare income tax returns for us in the Cameroonian Embassy in Rome?'

- connectives and interjections widely used in spoken Italian: *comunque* (anyway), *va bene* (okay), *diciamo che* (let's say that), *appunto* (in fact), *cioè* (that is), *Mamma mia* etc

(s) **MAMMA MIA** les JO ci sont forts
 'Oh my God! These boys are incredible'

As we can see, the majority of Italian words and expressions found in our corpus are exempted from the effects of alteration. This phenomenon can be interpreted not so much in terms of a marginal position of Italian within this variety, playing therefore in favor of the thesis of a contact between codes still in a very early stage, but that could be the sign of the strength of Italian, that somehow resists the domination of French as the dominant language within the language community in which Cameroonians resident in Italy are included.

In the sequences of spoken and written camfranglais we can also see that the inclusion of Italian words and expressions contribute to enrich the high lexical redundancy typical of Camfranglais, related to the coexistence of a large number of languages. For example Siebetcheu (forthcoming) indicates at least 12 synonyms for the word *ragazza* (girl), which is sometimes replaced by the Italian word *piccola*. We add, however, that some of these expressions are very vulgar and have a negative connotation. It is the case of *gonzesse* which means (nookie).

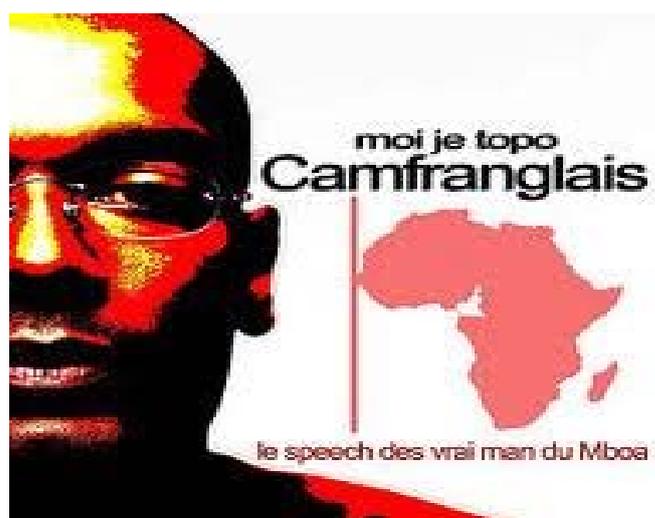
ngo (Basaa), *nga* (Beti), *ngui* (Pidgin English), *mbindi* (Pidgin English), *petite* (French), *piccola* (Italian), *meuf* (Verlan), *réssé* (Verlan), *nana* (Ewondo, Bulu, Eton), *nyango* (Duala, Basaa), *yoyette* (Cameroonian French jargon), *gonzesse* (Cameroonian French jargon).

In conclusion, the incorporation of Italian language in the use of spoken and written camfranglais used by Cameroonians living in Italy, although still limited to some lexical and morpho-syntactic phenomena linked to individual terms, represents for this variety an enrichment and expansion compared to Camfranglais used in Cameroon. In this hybrid language Italian tends to activate more sophisticated communication strategies than simple code-switching and loan words, particularly effective on a pragmatic level. Of course, the inclusion of Italian in Camfranglais, used by speakers very different from each other, move it away from the risk of the stigmatization to which Camfranglais is still partially subject in Cameroon, in relation to certain communicative contexts. Thanks to the Italian language, Camfranglitalien is therefore supposed to assume the features of a language strongly linked to identity values. The inclusion of the Italian language and the sophisticated communication strategies of this inclusion appear as the signal of a multilingual competence of Camfranglais speakers, which makes them able to not only take advantage of the available linguistic resources, through the activation of a metalinguistic task in which Italian assumes a significant role.

9. CAMFRANGLAIS AND NEW MEDIA: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

During recent years, studies about Camfranglais in Cameroon reveal that the hybrid language has gained and continues to gain new opportunities for communication, through the media (newspapers, radio, internet, television, advertising signs, etc..) But also through the world of entertainment (music, theater, etc..).

Figure 2. Sleeve of a disc titled in Camfranglais



Through the achievement of these media, the use of Camfranglais is in touch with current social phenomena, whether positive or negative, and becomes a tool to expose the socio-economic and political problems of the country (unemployment, corruption, tribalism, etc..). Camfranglais in the media is also a response against the political language, often too difficult to understand the majority of the Cameroonian society. It is therefore an expression of the rejection of the rule laid down by politicians and not considered relevant according to the linguistic needs of the youth and the illiterate. For this reason, "*cette langue s'accommode et à peu de règles et se crée, se renouvelle continuellement dans un élan de spontanéisme vital*" (Tabi Manga, 2000: 168), because its standardization could interrupt its creativity and the language uncontrollableness of speakers.

The recent extensive use of camfranglais has also made it a language widely used in trade exchange: it is used in business, because it allows traders to attract a large number of customers belonging to every social class and because it can guarantee a certain affection between dealers and customers. Actually, customers speaking French during a trade exchange in the market are considered by dealers as those with a high social position and therefore as being rich. In Italy, the use of Camfranglais is not the result of a cultural, generational, and linguistic split among young people and managers or between literates and illiterates, but it appears more like an instrument of unity and identity, a claim of linguistic, cultural and national identity. Camfranglais in Italy, thanks to its playful, sarcastic and funny component, is a tool that can recall the difficulties linked to both the reality of Cameroon, and problems of integration in Italy retaining a sense of humor.

Camfranglais used in Italy is also characterized by its use in multimedia communication: e-mail, SMS, Skype and social networks. Vitality is in this case linked to spontaneity with which this language is used in such communicative environments. Given the increasing importance of these media and their rapid diffusion, one of the most interesting prospects for future research concerns the possibility of expanding our corpus written with the data obtained from the network. As revealed in our investigation, Camfranglais spoken in Italy is different and largely incomprehensible to Camfranglais speakers residents in Cameroon. The use of such language in the social network could a way to describe the kind of perception Camfranglais speakers living in Cameroon and who do not know Italian with Camfranglais spoken in Italy.

If social networks can be an obstacle for the standard languages, for Camfranglais they are instead an advantage because simplicity, freedom and linguistic creativity are its prerogatives as for other hybrid languages. Among the various groups enrolled in the only social network site Facebook, we observed many groups related to Camfranglais as *Parlez-vous camfranglitalien Ici on topo camfranglais!*, *Le francamerounais ou Franc-anglais*, etc. The figure 3 presents a part of a discussion concerning the Camfranglitalien occurred on Facebook inside the group *Ici on topo camfranglais* [Here we speak

Camfranglais], on 12th November 2012 between two Cameroonians. While V lives in Cameroon and speak only Camfranglais, P lives in Italy and declare to speak both Camfranglais and Camfranglitalien. It is very interesting to observe the attitude of V because although Camfranglais is the result of the contact between European languages and Cameroonian local languages, he considers Camfranglitalien as the language of those who go to school. This is the proof that Camfranglais is no more considered as mixed language but as a language to all intents and purposes.

Figure 3. Conversation in Camfranglais concerning the Camfranglitalien issue



Translation of the conversation

V: My friend are you joking? You are talking about Camfranglais or Camfranglitalien?

P: I speak Camfranglais and Camfranglitalien so I am bilingual.

V: My friend, in our group probably you will not feel at ease! Because here we speak only Camfranglais. Italians are not part of our group, please leave us alone.

P: I understand you my friend, but today you are supposed to accept everything because of globalization

V: Globalo what? Guy, I did not go to school and I don't speak European languages. Please lower your intellectual level and respect my illiteracy condition.

In addition to the social networks, several websites offer Camfranglais dictionaries, an operation which allows Cameroonian immigrants or foreigners to learn Camfranglais spoken in Cameroon and analyze its evolution. Internet is therefore a tool for the dissemination of this language allowing to reach people living in different cities and countries.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The results of our work confirm that Cameroonian immigrants in Italy are an example a linguistic community with a very complex linguistic repertoire. As Guerrini (2002) observed for her research on Ghanaian immigrants in Bergamo, this complexity is also determined by the contact with Italian language and Italian dialects. In a similar context, Blommaert and Rampton (2011) used the word

“superdiversity”, i.e. a sociolinguistic dimension “characterized by a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration”. Therefore, the variety that Siebetcheu (2011a) indicates as Camfranglitalien, to make the difference with Camfranglais used in Cameroon, is not only to introduce a new immigrant idiom rooted in the Italian linguistic space, but is also the mark of a language which is different from a simple coexistence of languages getting in contact without distinction between standardized varieties and dialectal ones.

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