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Slang in Cameroon Pidgin English

By Napoleon K. Epoge

University of Yaounde, Cameroon

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to Trask and Stockwell (2007: 221), Pidgin English is an auxiliary language created by people with no language in common. Very many times in human history, people with no language in common have found themselves thrown together and obliged to deal with one another. Sometimes the language of just one group will be learned by the others and used as a lingua franca, but often something quite different happens: words from one or more of the languages of the people involved will be taken and stitched together into a kind of way of communicating. In the same light, Bussmann (1998) holds that the term 'pidgin' designates a mixed language that arises in situations where speakers of different languages are unable to understand each other's native language and, therefore, need to develop a common means of communication. In such situations, it is noticed that the structure and vocabulary of the individual native languages are reduced over time, in order to bring about general, mutual understanding. Gradually, a functional mixed language develops from the rudimentary contact language and is learned along with one's native language. This is pidgin.

Linguistically, pidgins are said to be characterized by a limited vocabulary, a greater use of

paraphrase and metaphor, a simplified phonological system, and a reduced morphology and syntax. It is also important to note, especially in view of naturalness theory and universals, that pidgin language systems are remarkably similar, regardless of whether they are related (English pidgins) or unrelated (English versus French pidgins) Bussmann (1998:905). Consequently, Holm (2004:5) defines pidgin as a reduced language that results from extended contact between groups of people with no language in common; it evolves when they need some means of verbal communication, perhaps for trade, but no group learns the native language of any other group for social reasons that may include lack of trust or close contact. Usually those with less power (speakers of substrate languages) are more accommodating and use words from the language of those with more power (the superstrate), although the meaning, form and use of these words may be influenced by the substrate languages. When dealing with the other groups, the superstrate speakers adopt many of these changes to make themselves more readily understood and no longer try to speak as they do within their own group. They cooperate with the other groups to create a make-shift language to serve their needs, simplifying by dropping unnecessary complications such as inflections (e.g., two knives becomes two knife) and reducing the number of different words they use, but compensating by extending their meanings or using circumlocutions.

Pidgins can and do arise whenever the conditions are favourable, and very many have been created just in the past few hundred years. Several were created along the east and west coasts of Africa, to facilitate trading among Africans, Europeans and Arabs. Many others were constructed in North America and the Caribbean, particularly to enable African slaves to talk to one another and to their European masters. And still others were constructed in the Far East, mainly for trading purposes.

It is healthy to point out here that linguists have realized that pidgins are not wrong versions of other languages but rather new languages. Their words were largely taken from an older language during a period of linguistic crisis to fill an urgent need for communication. This makes them appear to be deformed versions of that older language. However, if we examine pidgins as linguistic systems, wherein the structure of their syntax, word formation and phonology are analysed, it becomes evident that these systems are quite different from those of the language from which

Author : Department of English Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaounde, University of Yaounde I PO Box 47, Yaounde, Cameroon.
E-mail : mcepoge@yahoo.fr

they drew their lexicon. Their systems are so different that they can hardly be considered even dialects of their base language. They are new languages, shaped by many of the same linguistic forces that shaped English and other 'proper' languages (Holm 2004:1).

II. CAMEROON PIDGIN ENGLISH

In Cameroon, several scores of languages co-exist: two official languages (French and English), three major lingua francas (Pidgin English, Fulfulde and Ewondo Populaire (Koenig 1983)), and a multitude of over 280 diverse indigenous languages (Bitja'a-Kody 2004). The recent socio-linguistics survey of urban centres in Cameroon reveals that Cameroon Pidgin English is rapidly spreading throughout the country. In the extent of its area of dominance, and in the breath of the circumstances of its primary usage, Pidgin English in Cameroon clearly assumes an importance never previously recognized. Its effectiveness, as a means of communication between people who do not share a common "home language" or "received language", has crept from its original home, along the Atlantic coast, to urban centres as far as Maroua (Mbangwana 1983). Consequently, Cameroon Pidgin English has gained much popularity as a language of culture used for worship and evangelization by Christian churches, buying and selling, socialization, and used in musical compositions, folk-tales, and other popular literature (Mbangwana 1983). It is the language of development and phatic communion in Cameroon. In fact, it is very present in the daily socioeconomic lives of the Cameroonian people, serving as a bridge between Cameroonians of various walks of life. Although *Ethnologue* (2002) estimates its speakers at 2 million people, the number is quite conservative when we take into consideration the numerous potential Francophone speakers and immigrants of Nigerian and Ghaniain origin scattered all over the national territory (Echu 2003). Today, it remains the language of daily interaction in informal situations and one of the preferred languages of popular music. It is used in humorous situations and for making jokes. It is equally used to express certain taboos, for instance, when discussing love and sex in public.

As far as the varieties of Cameroon Pidgin English are concerned, there are four distinct varieties: the Grassland variety spoken in the North-West Region, the Bororo variety spoken by the Bororo, the Coastal variety spoken in the South-West Region and the Francophone variety spoken by Francophones (Echu 2003).

III. SLANG 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 items provide and reinforce social identity but they are 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 items are subject to change over time and from place to place, 'what is a slang term for one person, generation or situation may not be a slang term for another'. 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, and 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 of slang. People look down on it, but can hardly avoid using it, for everyone has some calling or profession. 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 lexemes have a comparatively short life but they can be very fashionable and picturesque. In certain cases, some of

these slang terms 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.

In West Africa in general, and in Cameroon in particular, slang is a form of language that is in a permanent state of continuous change. It consists of vivid and colourful words, and phrases which characterize various social and professional groups. Consequently, slang lexemes provide and reinforce social identity and achieve an air of informality and relaxation. They are also used to exhibit great social dynamism and as an arm against established authority and conventions.

IV. DATA AND SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The data for this study is based on my observations through recordings and field investigations over the past four years. The recordings involve mainly the conversations of speakers of Cameroon Pidgin English at different social events and conversations. The recordings reflect different settings, sexes, ages, ethnic and educational backgrounds. Some of the textual material, for this study, is also drawn from newspapers such as Eden, The Post, and from Cameroonian contemporary popular music as well as radio and television discussions. Data from various sources (whether oral or written) were put together and analyzed. With the assistance of some English language experts in the country and postgraduate students, the present researcher identified impressive lexical items used as slang terms in Cameroon Pidgin English.

The next stage in the exercise consisted in checking the degree of integration of these lexical items into the Cameroon Pidgin English. The technique adopted was that of telling the meaning of the words and constructing sentences with them. The respondents, who were randomly selected, had a least the GCE Ordinary Level. They were each given a small sample of twenty-five words and were asked to give the meaning of each word and to construct a sentence with each of them. The meaning and sentence construction exercise revealed that the words cited, as a corpus in this study, are recognized and accepted by at least 85% of the informants: they actually gave the meaning of these lexical items and constructed meaningful sentences with them. The meaning of each slang term and the sentence constructed conveyed the same meaning as the original sentence from which they were extracted. The remaining 15% include cases where some respondents simply skipped some of them.

V. DISCUSSION OF DATA

This section of the paper highlights the morphological and semantic innovations of Cameroon

Pidgin English slang items across speech and shows their originality of form and meaning. Focus is on slang items innovative word formation processes such as coinage, compounding, semantic extension, as well as their novel meaning and social value. These are words, expressions, and usages that are casual, vivid, racy, or playful replacements of usual or standard ones.

a) Coinage

It has to do with coming up with new words into the language. Structurally, these words do not seem to exhibit any observable pattern of construction.

1. *abakwa*: 'Bamenda', the headquarters of the North West Region of Cameroon.
2. *boulot*: 'a piece of job'; 'work'; 'to work'. e.g. *I get boulot for ntang*. ('I have work at home). *I di boulot* (for, 'I am working). *chewer*: 'a single man/woman with no companion of the opposite sex'.
3. *complice*: 'brother'; 'friend'. For instance, *Complice mimba wi* may mean 'Brother, remember us.' or 'Friend, remember us'.
4. *damer*: this slang is used as a verb and as a noun. As a verb it means 'to eat'. For instance, *you wan damer, you mimba wi* means 'When you want to eat, remember us'. As a noun it means 'food'. For instance, *you like damer too much* means 'You like food very much'.
5. *diko*: it is a verb with the meaning 'to die' as in *Wi no want diko*; which means 'We do not want to die'.
6. *docky*: 'documents'. It refers to forged official documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, result transcripts and testimonials, driving license etc.
7. *ekwen*: 'misery'. For instance, *Wi no want ekwen for dis Mboko* means 'We do not want misery in this home/Country'.
8. *flo*: it is a noun and it means 'cigarette', as this example demonstrates: *Na whose kind flo you di pompa so?* (Which brand of cigarette do you smoke like that?).
9. *jakass*: it is a Pidgin English word for 'a donkey'. As slang term, it means 'someone you are not on good terms with'. It also means 'a carrier'.
10. *katika*: from the English word 'caretaker'. The word refers to a security guard in charge of a public place like cinema hall, recreation ground, casino, etc. It entered current Cameroon Pidgin English usage in the late 1980s among young urban dwellers, as expressed essentially in oral discourse. It also refers to the person who controls and supervises gambling.
11. *kolo*: (one thousand CFA francs). The word *kolo* entered Cameroon Pidgin English spoken in Douala through bandits and highway robbers in the late 1960s. Today, it is used in the Cameroon Pidgin English of young both urban and rural dwellers.
12. *MBF*: this is an abbreviation which stands for 'Married But Free'. It is used to describe women who are married but still date other men.

13. *mbindi*: 'a little thing'.
14. *mboko*: 'country'.
15. *mbourou*: 'money', as demonstrated in the example *Wi no get mbourou for pay*
16. *damer*. (We do not have money for food).
17. *mbout*: abbreviated from Cameroon Pidgin English *mboutoukou*, which means 'a good for nothing person' or 'a weakling'. Mainly used by young people, this lexeme has been existing in Cameroon Pidgin English since the 1970s.
18. *mouf*: get out; go away. This interjection is used in jovial contexts, especially among young people. It is a lexical item very popular among students.
19. *mouna*: 'a child'. For instance, *mouna Africa* means 'a child of Africa'.
20. *ndamba*: 'football'; as in '*Wi like ndamba*'. This means 'We like football'.
21. *ndutu*: 'illluck', as exemplified by the structure *Na you bring ndutu for dis house*. (You brought illluck to this house). *nga* (also known as *small-thing*): 'a girlfriend'.
22. *ngata*: 'prison' as in *Wi no wan go for ngata*; which means 'We do not want to go to prison'. *ngeme* (also known as *fua*): It is used as a noun and as an adjective; and means *poverty* and *poor*. *ngegereu* (also known as *mokala*): 'an albino'.
23. *ngola*: 'Yaounde', the political capital of Cameroon.
24. *ngoma*: 'fifty CFA francs'
25. *ngum*: 'strength' For instance, *You no get ngum* means 'You do not have strength'; 'You are not strong enough'. *ngundu* (also known as *jokmasi*): 'work without pay'.
26. *ngry*: 'hunger' or 'famine' as exemplified by the structure *Na ngry don make that nga di no'tou plenti so*. (It is hunger that makes that lady sleeps so much).
27. *njaka*: 'a female child (daughter)'. e.g. *Ma njaka di sick*. (My daughter is sick)
28. *nkane*: (also *nkané*) 'prostitute; brothel'. Its presence in Cameroon Pidgin English dates from the 1960s in the metropolitan areas of Cameroon.
29. *no'tou*: 'to sleep'.
30. *nounou*: 'novice' and also 'newcomer'.
31. *ntang*: 'one's home'.
32. *ntong*: 'luck' and also 'lucky', as exemplified by the structure *You no get ntong complice*. (You are not lucky brother).
33. *padiman*: 'someone's closest or best friend'.
34. *Remé* (also *rémay*): 'one's mother' or 'an aged woman'.
35. *repé*: (also *répay*) 'one's father' or 'an aged man'.
36. *ressé*: (also *résay*) 'sister'; most especially 'an elderly sister'.
37. *sapeur*: 'a fashionable person'; 'someone who dresses well'.
38. *sabitout*: (also known as *oversabi*) someone who knows everything; pretentious person who claims to

know everything. The presence of *sabitout* in Cameroon Pidgin English is relatively recent, dating from the late 1990s. Source: Cameroonian popular music. *souler* (also known as *shark*): 'to drink'.

39. *tchoko*: This word is used as a noun and as a verb. As a noun it means 'bribe' and as a verb it means 'to bribe'.
40. *tchotchoro*: 'small; someone of no importance'. Speakers of Cameroon Pidgin English have been using this slang since the 1980s. Source of lexeme: oral contexts.
41. *tchouquer*: it comes from the Cameroon Pidgin English word *tchouk*, meaning 'to pierce'. It is a verb and means 'to have sexual relationship with a woman'. This loan entered Cameroon Pidgin English in the 1960s through a local French slang known as 'le français makro' used by some Douala city dwellers. Source of loan: musical tune "Marche arrière" by Petit Pays, 1996.
42. *titulaire*: 'a regular sexual partner'. *gombo*: 'money given to someone in order to corrupt him/her'.
43. *nyeh*: 'corrupt police officer'

b) *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*

1. *brain-box* (it is made up of two English nouns 'brain' and 'box'): an intelligent person.
2. *Bushfaller* (it is made up of the English noun 'bush' and 'a pidgin English coined noun from the verb 'to fall' (*faller*)): someone who after some time abroad returns with money and uses it carelessly.
3. *ndinga man* (it is made up of an indigenous language noun 'ndinga' (guitar), and an English noun 'man'): a person who plays a guitar (a guitarist). This word entered the Cameroon Pidgin English in the 1990s through Cameroon contemporary popular music.
4. *wata-yam* (it is made up of a pidgin induced noun 'wata' (water) and an English noun 'yam'): a weak person
5. *mini-minor* (it is made up of an English prefix 'mini' and noun 'minor'): a young woman who has not yet attained puberty; very young prostitute. This lexeme has been present in Cameroon Pidgin English since the early 1960s. It is mainly used in oral contexts.

ii) *verb + verb*

1. *bayam sellam* (it is made up of the present participle of the pidgin verbs 'to baye' (buy) and 'to sell' (sell)): 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.

2. *cry-die* (it is made up of two English verbs 'cry' and 'die'). It refers to a funeral.

iii) *verb + noun*

tchouk-head (it is made up of a pidgin verb 'tchouk' (to pierce), and an English noun 'head'): Porter.

iv) *verb + adverb + verb*

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.

v) *verb + adjective*

tchop-flop (it is made up of a pidgin verb 'tchop' (to eat) and a pidgin adjective 'flop' (full)): to be pregnant

vi) *noun + preposition + noun + pronoun + noun*

cova-for-massa-he-tchop (it is made up of a pidgin noun 'cova' (cover), an English preposition 'for', a pidgin noun 'massa' (husband), an English pronoun 'he' and a pidgin noun 'tchop' (food)): a female underpants.

vii) *adjective + adjective*

nyama nyama (it is made up of two pidgin adjectives 'nyama' (small) and 'nyama' (small): 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 Pidgin English in the early 1980s through oral usage.

viii) *adjective + noun*

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

ix) *verb + adverb*

nanga-boko (it is made up of an indigenous language word 'nanga' (to sleep) and a pidgin jargon 'boko'): a girl who usually sleeps out of her room.

c) *Semantic Extension*

As the details of everyday life change gradually, there is often a gradual extension in the meanings of words. One such extension is a change in the prototype of a category.

1. *bamenda* (the name of the headquarters of the North West Region of Cameroon): a person who behaves in a stupid way; a foolish person.
2. *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 Pidgin 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 cab were forced by the radical opposition political parties to go on strike.

3. *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.
4. *gist* (the essential point or meaning of something): to pass on recent news.
5. *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.
6. *match* (a contest between opponents, especially a sports contest): a love-making instance.
7. *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.
8. *small thing* (something of a relatively little size): a girlfriend.
9. *wuman wrapper* (a woman's loincloth): a male person who dates many women.

d) *Semantic Field*

Semantic field denotes a set of semantically related words whose meanings delimit each other and are said to cover a whole conceptual or objective field without gaps. This implies the organization of related words and expressions into a system which shows their relationship to one another. There is some evidence from word association experiments in psychology that these meaning relations are relevant for the way in which we store words in our 'mental lexicon' (Aitchison 1994). Thus, a semantic field contains words that belong to a defined area of meaning (e.g. reference to kin and other people). The field then becomes the context within which to establish meaning relations. Like similar language variants (Lillo 2001, Gorfach 2000, kouega 2009), the corpus that make up slang terms in Cameroon Pidgin English shows that the following semantic domains have supplied a good number of words: kin and other people, sex life, state of being and money.

i. *Kin and other people*

Common slang terms referring to kin and other people include: *katika* (a security guard in charge of a public place like cinema hall, recreation ground, casino, etc. It also refers to the person who controls and supervises gambling), *mouna* (a child), *mbout* ('a good for nothing person' or 'a weakling'), *sabitout* (also known as *oversabi*) someone who knows everything; pretentious person who claims to know everything), *tchotchoro* (small; someone of no importance), *njaka* (daughter), *complice* (brother; friend), *ressé* ('sister'),

remé (one's mother or an aged woman), *repé* (one's father or an aged man), *nounou* (a novice, newcomer), *ngegereu* also known as *mokala* (an albino), *bamenda* (a person who behaves in a stupid way; a stupid person), *jakass* (someone you are not on good terms with; a carrier), *bayam sellam* (a market woman who buys food products in the rural area and sells them immediately in the town or city), *bushfaller* (someone who after some time abroad returns with money and uses it carelessly), *nyama nyama*: (small; person or thing of little value or importance), *ndinga man* (a guitarist), *tchop-broke-pot* (a glutton or an extravagant person), *tchouk-head* (a porter), *wata-yam* (a weak person), *frog* (a francophone or French-speaking person), *japanese-handbrake* (a selfish or closed fist person), *report card* (a person who reports everything to the authority).

ii. Sex life

Some of the common slang terms referring to sexual activities and relationships include: *nkane* (prostitute; brothel), *tchouquer* (to have sexual relationship with a woman), *chewer* (a single man/woman with no companion of the opposite sex), *nga* (a girlfriend), *MBF* (Married But Free), *cova-for-massa-he-tchop* (a female underpants), *mini-minor* (a very young prostitute), *nanga-boko* (a girl who usually sleeps out of her room), *seven-plus-one* (AIDS), *godasse* (condom), *private part* (genitals), *wuman wrapper* (a male person who dates many women).

iii. State of being

Several words are used to convey a variety of state of being such as *ntong* (luck; lucky), *ndutu* (illluck), *ekwen* (misery), *ngeme* (also known as *fua* poverty), *andrew-marie-mbida* (something that is out of fashion), *ngry* (hunger; famine), *no'tou* (to sleep), *diko* (to die), *ngata* (to go to imprison).

iv. Money

The general term for money is *mbourou*. The various denominations are: *kolo* (a thousand francs CFA), *pièce* (a hundred francs CFA), and *ngoma* (fifty francs CFA). Other terms related to money are *tchoko* (to bribe or give a bribe), *ngundu* (work without pay), *ngeme* (poor), *gombo* (illegal financial gains), *boulot* (a piece of job or work).

e) Semantic and Social Value of Slang terms in Cameroon Pidgin English

Slang, in Cameroon Pidgin 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 and to keep the older generation and non-members of their group at distance. Thus, it is used to reinforce group cohesiveness, keeping insiders together and outsiders out. Aspects like *nkané* (prostitute), *flo* (cigarette), *frog* (francophone), *mouna* (child), *nga* (a girl), *ngeme* (poverty), *mbourou*

(money), *ntong* (luck), *andrew-marie-mbida* (something out of fashion), *screw* (to make love), *match* (instance of love-making), *ngeme* (poverty), *wuman wrapper* (a male person who dates many women) etc are considered related to young and fashionable people and are hardly understood by the outsiders. They also show that the user is in tune with the times. This portrays that slang, in Cameroon Pidgin 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. That is, they create their own identity.

The vocabulary of slang in Cameroon Pidgin English enriches the language with novel meanings. It establishes new extra senses, most of which derive from figurative language, for example, *tchop-broke-pot*. It refers to a glutton or an extravagant person; one that 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: *screw* 'to make love', *match* 'a love-making instance', *japanese-handbrake* (a selfish person), *small thing* 'a girlfriend', *wuman wrapper* (a male person who dates many women). Also, metaphoric extension is the cause of many new meanings such as *andrew-marie-mbida* for 'something that is out of fashion'; *ngeme* (also known as *fua*) for 'being poor and poverty'. *tchouk-head* for 'Porter'; *ekwen* for 'misery'. Slang terms in Cameroon Pidgin English coin new derogatory expressions such as *bamenda* for 'a foolish person or someone who behaves in a stupid manner', *ngengereu* for 'an albino', *nounou* for 'newcomer', *frog* for 'a francophone', *tchop-broke-pot* for 'extravagant person', *mini-minor* for 'a very young prostitute'. *nkané* for 'a prostitute'.

At the sociolinguistic level, it is worthwhile noting that Cameroon Pidgin English is generally used not only for exotic purposes, but also to create fun in humorous situations. The humorous nature of Cameroon English Pidgin slang terms (e.g. *tchop-broke-pot*, *frog*, *tchouquer*, *tchouk head*, *cova-for-massa-he-tchop*, *japanese-handbrake*, *slow-boy*, *wata-yam*, *screw*, *match*) makes it more lively and suitable for the expression of the feelings of the speakers. For instance, the slang term *tchop-broke-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 item *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. *Cova-for-massa-he-tchop* is another slang term that is humorous. It is humorous in that a woman's underpants are referred to as 'a lid (cover) of the container containing the food of the husband'.

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.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has examined slang terms in Cameroon Pidgin English and observed that speakers of Pidgin English in Cameroon, tend to render their interactions incomprehensible through lexical innovation processes such as coinage, compounding and semantic extension. These lexical items, which make up slang terms in Cameroon Pidgin English, are informal synonyms of the Pidgin English equivalents (e.g. slang *mouna*, CPE *pikin*; slang *abakwa*, CPE *Bamenda*; slang *wumam wrapper* CPE *akwara*; slang *damer*, CPE *tchop*; slang *mborou*, CPE *moni*; slang *tchoko* CPE *bribe*, slang *nga*, CPE *njumba*), and also 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 Pidgin English equivalent that can express the same concept. This also applies to slang terms such as *chewer* (a single man/woman with no companion of the opposite sex), *docky* (forged official documents), *bushfaller* (someone who after some time abroad returns with money and uses it carelessly), *jakass* (someone you are not on good terms with). Slang in Cameroon Pidgin English has vocabulary and phraseology from varied sources – English language (e.g. *frog* 'a French-speaking person', *private part* 'genital organs'), Cameroon indigenous languages (such as *nchinda* 'errand boy' *ngundu* 'work without pay', *nyama nyama* 'person or thing of little value or importance'), and the French language *boulot* ('a piece of job'). The list of words and expressions given above demonstrate characteristically youth 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. Thus, slang is a reality that is gaining more and more vigour in Cameroon Pidgin English. It is the pepper and salt of Cameroon Pidgin English, but like these condiments, it must be used sparingly with due care and taste.

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