

Youth Language in Africa and Europe as Examples of a Glocal Perspective

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Abstract

At the center of this article are two different perspectives on the structure of youth language: homogeneity and heterogeneity. Anecdotal discussions of youth language may give the impression, especially on the basis of dictionaries of youth language, that youth language is a homogeneous phenomenon, whereas scientific research considers youth language to be heterogeneous. In this article, both perspectives on youth language will first be critically re-examined. Secondly, a different viewpoint will be proposed to describe the structure of youth language, mixing homogeneous and heterogeneous elements. Using examples from French youth language and Cameroonian youth language, the aim is to show that youth language should be considered as a glocal phenomenon; global, because there are certain global commonalities between the different varieties of youth language, and local, because each variety of youth language has its own characteristic features.

Keywords

Youth Language, Europe, Africa, Glocal, Camfranglais, Verlan

1. Introduction

In contemporary western culture, youth is a socially defined construction that has gradually evolved with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, e.g. Eckert (2003: p. 112) “The life stage of adolescence is a product of industrial society, its history is closely tied to the development of universal institutionalized secondary education.” Androutsopoulos (1998: p. 4) argues for a broad definition of youth:

Youth language is to be regarded as an age-specific and socio-culturally conditioned phenomenon, this means for youth language research: the concept of youth is not biological but socially based. A broad definition of

youth as a social age phase is indispensable, which goes beyond puberty, the age of adolescence in the narrower sense, and also includes so-called post-adolescence, i.e. the period up to the age of 25 or even up to the end of the third decade of life.

Youth language, considered in the context of this work as a mode of expression used by people who are mainly in the life phase of youth, is recognized in the specialized literature as a heterogeneous linguistic phenomenon in itself. This assumption of heterogeneity refers on the one hand to its form of expression, e.g. Gloy et al. (1985: p. 115) “1. there is not (a) language of young people, because there are no young people as a homogeneous group, 2. there is no language of young people (as opposed to the language of adults), 3. there is no language of young people, but the speaking of young people”¹. Furthermore, this heterogeneous approach to youth language also refers to its protagonists, e.g. Mavellia (1991: p. 3):

Young people should be seen as an age-specific social group that is divided into subgroups according to social class, (musical) interests and (political) preferences. These in turn are divided into peer groups according to dress, hairstyle, social behavior and language use.²

In the context of this widely postulated heterogeneous perspective on youth language, the question arises whether this means that youth language breaks down into a multitude of linguistic styles so different that there are no linguistic commonalities between groups, no recurring patterns and continuities that could be considered communicative characteristics of youth? Are there no homogeneous features in the language of young people?

This article aims to challenge the assumption of heterogeneity in youth language, which is widely held in the scientific literature. To do so, we adopt a system-oriented approach, illustrated by examples drawn from French and African youth language, more specifically from Cameroon.

Drawing on Zimmermann & Remmert (2007: p. 70), this article aims to show that youth language can be considered as a glocal phenomenon that brings together heterogeneous and homogeneous features and that one can therefore recognize common global tendencies between the mentioned varieties of youth language, but that each variety develops at the same time its own local characteristics.

2. Homogeneity vs. Heterogeneity of Youth Language

The term *Jugendsprache* is often used in the German-speaking literature to refer

¹Original quote: 1) Es gibt nicht die (eine) Jugendsprache, weil es nicht die Jugend als homogene Gruppe gibt. 2) Es gibt nicht die Jugendsprache (im Gegensatz zur Erwachsenensprache). 3) Es gibt nicht die Jugendsprache, sondern das Sprechen von Jugendlichen.

²Original quote: Jugendliche sind als eine gesellschaftliche, altersspezifische Gruppe zu begreifen, die sich, je nach sozialer Schicht, (musikalischen) Interessen und (politischen) Präferenzen in Untergruppen gliedert. Diese gliedern sich wiederum nach Kleidung, Frisur, Sozialverhalten und Sprachgebrauch in peer groups.

to youth language, e.g. Neuland (2008), Androutsopoulos (1998) or Henne (2009).

The term *Jugendsprache* or the expression *la langue des jeunes* often used in French-speaking specialized literature, e.g. Goudaillier (2002), Boyer (1997) or the Spanish-speaking equivalent *lenguaje de jóvenes*, e.g. Rodríguez (2002) can, however, lead to misinterpretations, due to the use of the lexical unit *Sprache*, *langue* or *lenguaje*.

These terms may lead to the view that young people are a homogeneous group with a single language, according to the historical languages defined by Coseriu (1988: p. 48):

And more precisely, a historical language is a set of historical speaking traditions which is rightly recognized as an autonomous “language” by its own speakers and by the speakers of other languages, which is normally manifested by the fact that such a set is designated by an adiectivum proprium, such as “German language”, “English language”, “French language”. A historical language is thus a language which is already historically distinguished as such from other languages, to which this status is historically recognized.³

This assumption is supported by regularly published collections of youth language lexicons which, by collecting real or fictional youth language words, give the impression of providing a current overview of a homogeneous linguistic state of the youth social group.

Examples from the German-speaking world include Gamber (1984), *Do you speak Sponti- das letzte aus der Szene* or Müller-Thurau (1985): *Lexikon der Jugendsprache*. Current works include the *Pons Wörterbuch der Jugendsprache*, which is published annually, or the *Wörterbuch der Jugendsprache* by the Langenscheidt publishing house.

In the French-speaking world, we can mention, for example, Jean-Pierre Goudaillier’s (1997) work *Comment tu tchatches! Dictionnaire du français contemporain des cités* and *lexik des Cités 2007*, a lexical collection produced by young people from the Paris suburbs.

In the scientific community these dictionaries are not considered scientific. According to Neuland (2008: p. 13, 14), they have a popular claim at best, often only pseudo-scientific, as their lemmas are not scientifically guaranteed with regard to the choice of lexemes, the attributions of meaning and the indications of diffusion and group-specific usage. For Mavellia (1991: p. 5), they have more of an entertainment value, so that they contribute very strongly to the commercialization of youth language and not to its scientific study and lexicography. The

³Original quote: Und zwar ist eine historische Sprache ein Gefüge von historischen Traditionen des Sprechens, das eben als autonome “Sprache” von seinen eigenen Sprechern und von den Sprechern anderer Sprachen anerkannt wird, was sich normalerweise dadurch zeigt, dass ein solches Gefüge durch ein adiectivum proprium bezeichnet wird, wie z.B. “deutsche Sprache”, “englische Sprache”, “französische Sprache”. Eine historische Sprache ist also eine Sprache, die schon als solche von anderen Sprachen historisch abgegrenzt ist, der dieser Status historisch zuerkannt wird.

strong commercialization of youth language by means of dictionaries has the disadvantage of conveying the image of a homogeneous language and youth group with a uniform vocabulary that can be fixed and memorized at will in order to have access to young people. However, this homogeneous image of youth and youth language cannot be confirmed in this form in reality.

2.1. The Heterogeneity of Youth and Youth Language

The assumption of youth homogeneity postulated in the early days of German-language research on youth language gives way rather quickly to a heterogeneous approach, based on the idea that the large group of young people can be divided into different subgroups, as [Wieland \(2008: p. 103\)](#) notes, for example: “Youth [...] as a phase with partial cultural autonomy, which is above all marked by cliques and smaller subgroups.”⁴

The large group of young people is thus broken down into different subgroups, so that one cannot speak of a homogeneous group of young people. These different subgroups of young people may be of a different nature.

Thus, for example, socially defined subgroups are formed according to occupational status, as [Heinemann \(1990: p. 15\)](#) shows: “The large social group of young people is again differentiated within itself and consists of different social subgroups: apprentices, students, young workers, etc.”⁵ In addition, subgroups can be formed according to, for example, musical or political preferences, e.g. [Mavellia \(1991: p. 3\)](#):

Young people should be seen as an age-specific social group that divides into subgroups according to social class, (musical) interests and (political) preferences. These in turn divide into peer groups according to dress, hairstyle, social behaviour and language use.⁶

According to [Mavellia \(1991: p. 3\)](#), subgroups of young people first distinguish themselves according to their personal preferences and then subdivide again, for example according to external or personal factors, into further subgroups called *peergroups*.

This approach to the double subdivision of youth is also found in [Augenstein \(1998: p. 25\)](#) and [Androutsopoulos \(1998: p. 4\)](#).

[Augenstein \(1998: p. 25\)](#) considers youth at the macro-sociological level as a specific group within the framework of the global society. At a lower level, she subdivides the youth group into different subgroups, such as rappers or punks. Finally, she breaks down these subgroups into different *peergroups*, singular

⁴Original quote: Die Jugend [...] als Phase mit teilweise kultureller Autonomie, die vor allem von Cliquen und kleineren Teilgruppen geprägt wird.

⁵Original quote: Die soziale Großgruppe Jugend ist in sich wieder differenziert und besteht aus verschiedenen sozialen Teilgruppen: Lehrlinge, Studenten, junge Arbeiter etc.

⁶Original quote: Jugendliche sind als eine gesellschaftliche, altersspezifische Gruppe zu begreifen, die sich, je nach sozialer Schicht, (musikalischen) Interessen und (politischen) Präferenzen in Untergruppen gliedert. Diese gliedern sich wiederum nach Kleidung, Frisur, Sozialverhalten und Sprachgebrauch in *peergroups*.

groups that are formed on the basis of specific needs.

Androutsopoulos (1998: p. 4) writes that three group concepts are distinguished in youth language research, the large virtual group of youth ; the sub-culture or youth culture level; the peer group level.

This twofold subdivision gives a very heterogeneous picture of the large youth group, which is broken down into a multitude of subgroups or peer groups, the exact number of which cannot be determined because of the great diversity of young people's interests.

The reason for this division within the large youth group lies in the phase of adolescence itself, which for many young people represents a conflictual phase of life, during which they often lack a stable age and gender identity of their own, which can lead to a mismatch with parental authority, e.g. Mavellia (1991: p. 3).

Peer groups are often a kind of surrogate family for young people who support and accompany them on the difficult path to adulthood and who understand young people's problems, as Heinemann (1990: p. 14) writes:

[...] in such groups young people find what they need in the search for their place in society, namely recognition by others of their real or supposed problems, problems which—importantly—do not need to be explained [...].⁷

The division of the large group of young people into different peer groups, to which young people belong actively or also passively, gives a heterogeneous image of the large group of young people.

This heterogeneous image of youth has a logical effect on the linguistic situation within youth, e.g. Heinemann (1990: p. 15):

The large social group of young people is again differentiated in itself and consists of different social subgroups. [Each group has its own specific behavioral norms, its own representations of goals and also a group-specific speaking behavior.⁸

In the large youth group, therefore, there is a “group-specific language behavior” in each subgroup, which means that the youth language is not a homogeneous unit any more than the youth group is, but is distinguished by its heterogeneity and that one cannot speak of a single youth language⁹.

Schlobinski et al. (1993: p. 36) point out the mentioned heterogeneity of young people as well as of youth language and state that the concept of youth language cannot exist: “There can be no youth language because youth does not

⁷Original quote: [...] in solchen Gruppen finden die Jugendlichen, was sie auf der Suche nach Ihrem Platz in der Gesellschaft brauchen, nämlich eine Anerkennung ihrer wirklichen oder angenommenen Probleme durch andere, Probleme, die - was wichtig ist - nicht erklärt werden müssen [...].

⁸Original quote: Die soziale Großgruppe Jugend ist in sich wieder differenziert und besteht aus verschiedenen sozialen Teilgruppen. [...] Jede Gruppe hat ihre spezifischen Verhaltensnormen, ihre Zielvorstellungen und auch ein gruppenspezifisches Sprechverhalten.

⁹Despite the fact that youth language is not a homogeneous language, in order to respect a homogeneous terminology, the term youth language will be used hereafter as a general term to refer to the heterogeneous phenomenon of youth speech.

exist as a homogeneous group.”¹⁰

2.2. Youth Language as a Glocal Phenomenon

The heterogeneity of youth and youth language is undisputed in the literature, but it should be considered in a more nuanced way, as an overly strict interpretation of this heterogeneity of youth language may lead to the assumption that youth language breaks down into so many different language styles that no common linguistic and functional pattern can be identified. A purely homogeneous or purely heterogeneous approach to youth and youth language is too narrow and leaves no space in between, which I think is necessary if we want to do justice to the complexity of youth and youth language.

Therefore, a middle way should be found between the homogeneity and heterogeneity hypothesis, which is defended for example by [Androutsopoulos \(1998: p. 3\)](#).

He puts forward the hypothesis of a global youth language which, in the context of a system-oriented approach, states that all youth languages, i.e. all the speaking styles of small concrete groups or networks of young people, have transversal contours which, as a whole, constitute the prototype of youth language.

[Androutsopoulos \(1998\)](#) thus also attributes a heterogeneous character to youth language, as it breaks down into different linguistic styles according to different youth subgroups. At the same time, he underlines the homogeneous features of youth language, as the different language styles broken down into their heterogeneous basic structure show common linguistic tendencies which together form an overall youth language. To better illustrate this idea, we can use the term glocalization, derived from economics.

It is a neologism formed from the terms global and local, introduced by the sociologist Robert Robertson. His neologism is based on the Japanese term *do-chakuka*, which refers to an agricultural principle that adapts farming techniques to the environment, e.g. [Robertson \(1998: p. 197\)](#).

The term glocalization is used, for example, in different scientific disciplines to show that a global phenomenon has local manifestations.

[Hepp \(2004: p. 177\)](#) notes in this context that “Robertson’s point (...) is that the local must be seen as a micro-manifestation of the global or permeated by it and precisely not as an enclave of globalisation.”

3. Youth Language as a Field of Linguistic Research

From a linguistic point of view, youth language is an interesting field of research, as young people are considered to have their own slang as a consequence of their search for their own identity, e.g. [Jørgensen \(2008\)](#).

Furthermore, youth language is attributed with the property of constantly renewing itself and it is furthermore seen as a passage to adult language, e.g. [Zim-](#)

¹⁰Original quote: Es kann die Jugendsprache nicht geben, weil es die Jugend als homogene Gruppe nicht gibt.

mermann (2002: p. 138): “new words enter youth language with great ease and then pass into adult language.¹¹”

Youth language is also seen as less bound by norms than standard language, e.g. Rodríguez (2002: p. 22) and thus offers a good ground for linguistic games of different kinds.

The properties mentioned, as well as various linguistic characteristics, some of which will be briefly mentioned below, make youth language an international research topic, as shown by the literature and various research projects on the subject, e.g. the COLA project at the University of Bergen, Heike Wiese’s Kiez-Deutsch project in Berlin, or the Multicultural English/French project at the University of Paris/Nanterre and Queen Mary University of London.

It is possible to differentiate between two perspectives on the linguistic characteristics of youth language: that of young people and that of the specialized literature.

According to Neuland (2008: p. 44), young people notice the following typical characteristics of youth language, “more casual than adult language, use of expressions borrowed from English, rapid change, use of provocative modes of expression, abbreviations and incomplete sentences, and playing with language”.

These characteristics are similar to those cited by young people in Schlobinski et al. (1993: p. 169, 180), “particles, intensifiers, word creations, word/phrase abbreviations, anglicisms as well as directness, honesty and a certain irreverence often described as casual.”

The literature also cites various characteristics of youth language. Zimmermann (1990: p. 241) names in particular lexical features, such as the attribution of new meanings to lexemes, semantic changes, syntactic innovations as well as borrowings from English.

Henne (1986: p. 22) describes structural forms, such as terms of address, idioms, metaphors, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, word formations and word abbreviations as characteristic of youth language.

Kundegraber (2008: p. 104) gives a broad overview of the linguistic characteristics of youth language, which can be summarized in a few key words: superlatives, abbreviations, reductions, metaphors and borrowings.

It is clear that the research perspective on the characteristics of youth language has some similarities with the youth perspective: intensifiers, pragmatic markers, creation of new words, abbreviations and borrowings.

A closer look at the functions of youth language shows that in scientific research three aspects are particularly often highlighted in this respect: the cryptic aspect, the playful aspect, the identity aspect.

The identity aspect as a function of youth language is mentioned by Henne (1986), Zimmermann (1996) or Kundegraber (2008), among others, and can be seen as an important function of youth language. Through the identity function, young people try to give themselves an identity of their own with the help of

¹¹Original quote: Las palabras nuevas entran con gran facilidad en el lenguaje juvenil, y pasan luego al lenguaje adulto.

youth language and thus consciously distinguish themselves from the language and world of adults and, as Neuland (2008: p. 138) puts it, “to speak differently from adults.”

The cryptic function encodes the message that the speaker wishes to convey. The message is coded towards outsiders so as not to be understood, which leads to a conscious demarcation from other people and includes the identity function.

The play function is on the one hand the expression and need for individual originality and creativity or the need to play with language. Young people play with language in order to give free rein to their creativity. On the other hand, young people also play with language to code it, which implies the cryptic function, in order to stand out, which corresponds to the identity function.

4. Youth Language as a Global Phenomenon: Camfranglais and Verlan

This section aims to show the glocal character of youth language by using examples from Camfranglais and Verlan. The reasoning behind focusing on specific examples from African and European youth language is that the theoretical points made become much clearer with the help of practical examples. The limitation to only two youth language phenomena is due to the limited scope of the article.

The data on which the observations described below are based come from two different corpora.

For verlan, they are taken from audio recordings made during the 2010s in different towns in the Paris suburbs with teenagers of various origins, aged between 13 and 18. This corpus is made available to students of Romance language linguistics at the University of Bochum. The data on Camfranglais comes mostly from the specialized literature on this subject and from the songs of the Cameroonian rapper Koppo, who uses Camfranglais in his songs thus initiating “a change in Cameroonian rap circles by addressing social issues [...]”, e.g. Awondo and Manga (2016: p. 134).

4.1. Camfranglais

Camfranglais, also known by the acronym CFG, is “generally presented as a composite language of young people, born of contact and mixing between French, English and Cameroonian languages,”¹² Raschi (2019).

With Essono (1997: pp. 381-382) we can add that Camfranglais was born out of the desire of “African speakers to forge a language that is simple both phonologically and morphologically and syntactically”¹³ and Sol (2010: p. 40) describes it as a “means of rebelling against the French language”¹⁴ while Alen Garabato

¹²Original quote: [...] généralement présenté comme un parler composite de jeunes, né du contact et du mélange entre le français, l’anglais et les langues camerounaises.

¹³Original quote: locuteurs Africains de forger une langue simple tant sur le plan phonologique que morphologique et syntaxique.

¹⁴Original quote: moyen de se révolter contre la langue française.

and Boyer (2014: p. 8) highlight its status as a “playful and cryptic generational sociolect.”¹⁵

According to Ntsobe et al. (2008: p. 18), Camfranglais represents a lexical creativity composed of a French dominance around 60% of occurrences, 25% of English, 10% fruit of linguistic creativity and the rest borrowed from the languages of Cameroon.

The opening syllable “cam-” expresses the affirmation of a certain national identity and, implicitly, the desire for a language common to all, in an attempt to overcome ethnic, geographical and even social divides, Raschi (2019: p. 60).

This way of “hybrid speaking, lexically made up of terms from Cameroonian languages, English pidgin, French, English” e.g. Biloa (1999: p. 147) is particularly widespread among students and school children. They use it outside the classroom and so Camfranglais spills out of the schools and universities and begins to reach “the neighborhoods, markets and public places,”¹⁶ e.g. Mendo Ze (1999: p. 58).

According to Biloa (1999: pp. 152-154), one can distinguish ten operating principles of Camfranglais, the following of which testify, among others, to the playful, identifying and cryptic character of Camfranglais, already noted above:

1) Each utterance or sentence adopts the deep structure of one of the main sources. (usually French but in some cases also English or pidgin English) [...] 4) The elements integrated into the structure are intended to make the utterance incomprehensible, 5) Incomprehensible words are used as much as necessary to keep the utterance amusing and incomprehensible, 6) Incomprehensible words are not subject to the grammatical rules of the language that delivers the deep structure, 7) Borrowed elements keep their original pronunciation, 8) The pronunciation of an invented element is changed to avoid confusion with already existing elements, 9) Different words from different origins but with the same meaning are used synonymously, 10) Camfranglais is an oral medium of expression.

As for its functioning, there is nothing new in Camfranglais. The lexicon formation processes employed are sometimes semantic processes (among them, extension, derivation, metaphor, metonymy) and sometimes formal processes (e.g. derivation and truncation) which are not original, but which are found in both popular French and hexagonian youth French, e.g. Raschi (2019: p. 63) based on Bertucci (2011: pp. 13-25).

4.2. The Verlan

In contemporary urban French, e.g. Goudaillier (2007: p. 121), verlan exists as a “linguistic process of coding, of formal transformation.” The verlanisation of words responds to a real desire to distance oneself (identity function) from the standard uses of the language and to a very strong desire to transgress it (subversive function). Thus, “verlan is not only a coding (cryptic function), allowing the

¹⁵Original quote: sociolecte générationnel ludique et cryptique.

¹⁶Original quote: les quartiers, les marchés et les places publiques.

excluded to exclude those who exclude them, e.g. Bourdieu (1983), but also a way of marking one's identity in relation to those who are outside the network of peers in the city"¹⁷, e.g. Goudaillier (2007: p. 122).

Sloutsky & Black (2008: p. 308) describe verlan as a language game, pointing out that it "belongs by its origin to a language game whose function consists in a simple displacement of syllables."

Like Camfranglais, verlan combines the following characteristic features of youth language: playful, cryptic and identity-based.

It must be noted that, consequently, one can speak of youth language as a global phenomenon, because the characteristics in question detected for French youth language regarding its function are reflected by Cameroonian Camfranglais. Furthermore, Camfranglais uses lexicon formation processes similar to French youth language, which also testifies to the homogeneous character of youth language.

5. Youth Language as a Local Phenomenon

The functions of youth language and the lexical formation processes described in the previous passage testify to the fact that there is indeed a homogeneous, and therefore global, dimension between youth language in France and youth language in Africa, more specifically in Cameroon. However, if we take a closer look at the functioning and linguistic examples of Camfranglais and Verlan, it becomes clear that each of these linguistic particularities has local characteristics.

5.1. Camfranglais as an Expression of Local Youth Language

One of the particularities of Camfranglais, which makes it possible to speak of a local phenomenon of youth language, is its lexicon, e.g. Raschi (2019: p. 62).

As with youth language in general, what is salient in Camfranglais, and what seems to be specific to it, has to do with the lexicon used which, because of its heterogeneity, necessarily constitutes the most flavourful part [...].¹⁸

The unusual character of the Camfranglais lexicon is reflected in the fact that "the lexicon used resembles a mosaic composed of neologisms mixed with borrowings from the various languages involved,"¹⁹ e.g. Raschi (2019: p. 63).

Among the examples we find, for example, catchwords such as "chômecam" coming from "chômeur"²⁰ and "Cameroun", heavily used in the press dealing with current affairs, e.g. Nzesse (2009: p. 73) or examples of duplication of

¹⁷Original quote: le verlan n'est pas seulement un codage (fonction cryptique), permettant aux exclus d'exclure ceux qui les excluent, e.g. Bourdieu (1983), mais aussi une façon de bien marquer son identité par rapport à ceux qui sont à l'extérieur du réseau de pairs de la cité.

¹⁸Original quote: Comme pour les parlers des jeunes en général, ce qui est saillant en camfranglais, et ce qui semble lui être spécifique, a trait au lexique utilisé qui, de par son hétérogénéité, constitue nécessairement la partie la plus savoureuse [...].

¹⁹Original quote: le lexique utilisé ressemble à une mosaïque composée de néologismes mélangés aux emprunts effectués aux différentes langues interpellées.

²⁰French for "unemployed person".

nouns, such as “bilibili” (a local beer based on millet or maize) Nzesse (2009: p. 63) and “zoua-zoua” (an onomatopoeia designating a low-quality fuel) Nzesse (2009: pp. 167-168).

According to Raschi (2019: p. 64) “the trend is towards the francization of terms from ethnic languages” including *ngangament* where the doubled root, comes from the African language ewondo from the Beti language group, e.g. Ebongue (2017: p. 67) and the inflection is typical of French adverbs of modality. *Nga* meaning *girlfriend*, *ngangament* can then be translated as *coquettement*²¹, e.g. Raschi (2019: p. 64). Another case of internal hybridization, in this case linking an English base to a French inflectional, is the word *knoweur*, e.g. Raschi (2019: p. 64), a person who knows.

This hybridization at the lexical level can also be seen at the morpho-syntactic level, where “morphemes of French origin are added to verbal lexemes of English origin, whether person or tense morphemes, coming especially from the imperfect tense, whose disinence is very present”²², e.g. Raschi (2019: p. 64), e.g. *Je mimba-ais qu’il allait recame* (I thought he was going to come back), e.g. De Féral (2006: p. 218).

At the syntactic level, the following sentence, taken from the song *si tu vois ma go*²³ by the Cameroonian rapper Koppo, illustrates the mixture of three languages, French, English and a local African language, characteristic of Camfranglais, *Je go chez les white falla les do*, which could be translated as *I’m going to the country of the white people to make some money*.

The examples chosen show pertinently that Camfranglais has its own linguistic peculiarities, at the lexical, morphosyntactic and syntactic levels, reflecting its local dimension, which is different from young French speakers.

5.2. The Verlan as an Expression of Local Youth Language

The verlan is a local linguistic peculiarity of young French speakers, which is formed by various processes, the most frequent of which is the inversion of syllables in two-syllable words, such as *pourri*²⁴ → *ripou*, *beaugosse*²⁵ → *gossbeau* or *music* → *zicmu*. The following examples give an impression of the wide range of uses of verlan in young French.

1) A: C’était un truc sur trois étages eh il y avait eh un salon de genre 100 mètre carré.

B: Ah

A: Une *cuisine de geudin* avec eh trois fours.

B: Haha

2) A: Ma parole on flippait trop que notre Sophie nous ramène un petit *goibo*

²¹French for “coquettishly”.

²²Original quote: des morphèmes d’origine française aux lexèmes verbaux d’origine anglaise, que ce soit des morphèmes de personne ou de temps, venant surtout de l’imparfait dont la désinence est bien présente.

²³Can be translated in English as “if you see my girl”.

²⁴French for “a corrupted person”.

²⁵French for “a goodlooking guy”.

sa mère qui se la pète, mais là je suis rassuré.

B: Vous me voyez ravi de convenir à vos attentes.

3) A: C'est une bombe [...] la Sandra, là ma parole j'ai pas dormi de la nuit.

B: Qui Sandra? Eh tu te fous de moi? Elle est toute *kéblo*.

4) A: Non non je crois qu'il est...

B: Ah sa mère il y a les *ceufs*, mets ta ceinture Ali.

5) Putain je sais pas quoi faire *sur la tête de ma reum*.

As the examples above, taken from the corpus of youth language in the Paris region, illustrate, verlan can be used for example in intensifying prepositional phrases, e.g. example 1) *une cuisine de gueudin*²⁶ where the verlan of the adjective *dingue*²⁷ has a communicative role. By reinforcing the value attributed to the kitchen in question, using the verlanized word *gueudin*, the speaker tries to persuade the interlocutor of the quality of the kitchen in question.

Then we see that verlan can also be used in lexical formation, reflecting on the one hand the playful aspect of verlan, but at the same time also the cryptic and identity aspect, as the meaning of verlanized words remains inaccessible to people who are not familiar with this linguistic procedure and allows communication within a group of initiates. Thus, the examples show that lexical formation can concern nouns, e.g. examples 2) *goibo*²⁸, 4) *ceufs*²⁹ and 5) *reum*³⁰ or adjectives, e.g. example 3) *kéblo*³¹.

6. Conclusion

The explanations provided in this contribution lead to the conclusion that youth language, such as verlan from youth language in France and Camfranglais from youth language in Cameroon, can be considered as a glocal phenomenon. In this quality, youth language has heterogeneous and homogeneous features between its different varieties. The varieties analyzed in the present contribution indicate convergences on the one hand in the functions of youth language. Both verlan and Camfranglais are used for playful, cryptic and identity-related purposes, thus reflecting the main functions of youth language. In addition, the formation of a new lexicon, serving as the main means of expression of the playful, cryptic and identity-related aspect, is observed as a concordant feature between the two varieties mentioned.

The contribution reveals that both verlan and Camfranglais also reflect the heterogeneous character of youth language, as both linguistic phenomena have their own characteristic features.

The verlan shows a novel way of functioning, by inverting the syllables of words with at least two syllables.

This process can be applied to different classes of words, for various commu-

²⁶Can be translated as "an incredibly impressive kitchen".

²⁷French for "crazy".

²⁸Verlan of the french word *bourgeois* – engl. *Bourgeois*.

²⁹Verlan of the french word *les flics* – engl. *the cops*.

³⁰Verlan of the french word *mère* – engl. *Mother*.

³¹Verlan of the french word *bloqué* – engl. *Blocked*.

nicative purposes, including linguistic reinforcement or encryption of the message conveyed.

Camfranglais, on the other hand, stands out for mixing different languages at the lexical and syntactic level, offering its speakers a wide range of possibilities for linguistic constructions that may be difficult for the uninitiated to access.

The contribution leads to the conclusion, in view of the homogeneous and heterogeneous functional, lexical, morphological and syntactic features detected for Verlan and Camfranglais, that youth language can be considered as a glocal phenomenon.

Building on the analyses of the two linguistic phenomena of European and African youth language presented above, it would be interesting to confirm the observed glocalisation on the basis of other linguistic phenomena and to extend it to youth language varieties from other languages and continents, to raise the investigations made to a more global level.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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