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Contact-Induced Changes: Lexical Borrowings in Territorial Varieties of English and French in Cameroon

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Abstract. The article provides an insight into the problem of lexical borrowings in the territorial varieties of European languages used in Africa. The aim of the study is to assess the extent to which various ethnic languages and the Cameroonian Pidgin English influence the vocabulary of the territorial variants of English and French spoken in Cameroon. Adopting a comprehensive approach that integrates both linguistic and extralinguistic factors, the study analyzes processes of language contact, borrowing, and their linguistic outcomes. Two complementary classifications of borrowings are proposed – the lexical-morphological and the thematic one. Statistical analysis was conducted to measure the contributions of languages from four cultural areas – Sudano-Sahelian, Grassfield, Fang-Beti, and Coastal Bantu – and the Cameroonian Pidgin English across thematic categories. The findings highlight the differential impact of these cultural areas and underscore the pivotal role of Cameroonian Pidgin English in the process of lexical exchange. The study reveals an ongoing process of lexical enrichment and adaptation in the English and French varieties spoken in Cameroon, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between European and indigenous linguistic systems. This research not only advances understanding of the unique features of territorial varieties of English and French but also offers insights into broader relevance in language contact and variation.

Keywords: contact-induced changes, borrowing, calque, multilingual context, English, French, Cameroon

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Контактообусловленные изменения: лексические заимствования в территориальных разновидностях английского и французского языков в Камеруне

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Аннотация. Цель исследования – оценить степень влияния многочисленных этнических языков и креольского языка пиджин-инглиш на словарный состав территориальных вариантов английского и французского языков Камеруна. В работе применялся комплексный подход, позволивший учесть

как лингвистические, так и экстравалингвистические аспекты языкового контакта, процесса заимствования и его последствий. Были выполнены две взаимодополняющие классификации лексических заимствований: лексико-морфологическая и тематическая. Проведен статистический анализ вклада языков четырех культурных зон – судано-сахельской, грассфилдской, бети-фанг, прибрежных банту – и камерунского креольского языка pidgin-инглиш в выделенные тематические группы классификации. Анализ показал относительное влияние языков различных культурных зон, а также ключевую роль камерунского pidgin-инглиш в процессе лексического обмена. В результате исследования можно сделать вывод о динамичном процессе лексического обогащения и адаптации европейских языков в Камеруне за счет заимствований из многочисленных местных языков. Данное исследование способствует более глубокому пониманию уникальных особенностей территориальных вариантов европейских языков и может представлять интерес не только для исследователей в данной предметной области, но и для широкого круга читателей, интересующихся вопросами языковых контактов и вариативности.

Ключевые слова: контактобусловленные изменения, заимствование, калька, многоязычный контекст, английский, французский, Камерун

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Introduction

The study of language contact has developed into a dynamic area within linguistics, gaining recognition as a distinct field in the late twentieth century. The pioneering works of W. Weinreich [1953] and E. Haugen [1956] paved the way for its emergence. Various contact-related phenomena were explored in subsequent research by scholars such as S.G. Thomason and T. Kaufman [1988]; C. Myers-Scotton [2002]; J. Baghana [2004]; V.T. Klokov and Yu.S. Blazhevich, [2018]; A.M. Molodkin [2001], and others. Their works cover a wide range of topics, including pidgin and creole formation, language shift, language convergence, code-switching, and language change resulting from contact situations. In Russia, for example, the scientific school under the guidance of Professor J. Baghana is making significant contributions to understanding the sociolinguistic, cultural and structural impacts of language contact.

One of the outcomes of language contact is borrowing. According to J.F. Phelizon (1976), borrowing represents the process through which one language adopts linguistic elements from another¹. Loanwords penetrate another language, are integrated into the lexical, phonetic and grammatical systems of the recipient language and are used by the speakers, regardless of whether they are bilinguals or not [Baghana et al., 2017]. In multilingual settings, such new entries contribute to smoother communication and promote cultural integration.

The sociolinguistic situation in Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by a high percentage of multilingual population. An average African can speak two or more languages, which makes their vocabulary more susceptible to lexical innovation. Surrounded by many cultures, African people can easily incorporate into their vocabulary new names denoting objects and phenomena belonging to other peoples. This leads to multiple changes in the European languages operating outside their ancestral territories in new cultural and social background of Africa.

The analysis of contact-induced changes enhances our understanding of how European languages evolve when transplanted into new cultural and historical contexts. Thus, it contributes to broader theoretical discussions on language contact and adaptation. In this respect, the study is relevant, as it provides a scientific insight into the dynamic lexical changes shaping these varieties.

¹ Phelizon J.H. 1976. *Vocabulaire de la linguistique*. Paris, Roudil. P. 75

The aim of the study is to assess the impact of the languages belonging to four cultural areas (Sudano-Sahelian, Fang-Beti, Grassfield, and Coastal Bantu) and Cameroonian Pidgin English (a local Creole) on the vocabulary of territorial varieties of English and French in Cameroon. The objectives are to classify borrowings by lexical-morphological and thematic criteria, statistically analyze the contribution of each cultural area and Cameroonian Pidgin English to thematic groups, and interpret the results in light of extra-linguistic factors of the language contact.

Methods

The study employs an integrated approach that considers both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors causing contact-induced changes in the territorial varieties of the French and English languages of Cameroon. We applied various methods throughout the research: contextual and definition analysis, taxonomic and thematic classification methods, continuous sampling and statistical methods.

Results and discussion

Contact-induced changes in the lexical system can be detected both in form and meaning. In this study, we consider a variety of cases of lexical borrowing. Most of them involve both phonetic form and semantic content being borrowed from a donor language and transferred to a recipient language, which can be either English or French.

In some cases only semantic content is borrowed. Either an existing word receives a new meaning to convey a new concept, or foreign words and expressions are translated into the recipient language (these are known as calques or loan translations). “For compound words and phrases, that is, composite lexical units, three types of interference are possible: all their components can be transferred in the analyzed form; all components can be reproduced by semantic extension; finally, some components can be transferred while the others can be reproduced. The transfer of such words occurs when the components of a complex word or phrase adapt to the models of word formation and syntax of the recipient language” [Baghana, 2004, p. 65-66].

The intensity of contact-induced changes in a language depends on specific linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. One of the most important triggers for the process of direct borrowing is the situation of bilingualism or multilingualism, when language communities have to contact each other.

In the post-colonial period, the influx of borrowings from Negro-African languages in territorial varieties of the European languages in Africa began to increase, because in the new political and social conditions people started to care more about their cultural identity and felt free to express it. Some factual examples can help to illustrate the situation.

For instance, the vocabularies of the territorial varieties of English and French in Cameroon are abundant with words borrowed from the local indigenous languages and Cameroonian Pidgin English. “French and English contacted local Cameroonian languages during the most important historical periods: the discovery of the continent, the slave trade and colonization and in the postcolonial period. Judging by the presence of numerous loanwords from Cameroonian ethnic languages in the territorial varieties of French and English in Cameroon, the impact of local languages on these European languages is significant” [Blazhevich, 2021, p. 269].

Local languages continue to exert a strong influence on the country’s linguistic landscape, which is evident in the ongoing incorporation of elements from indigenous languages into the regional varieties of French and English. These loanwords are not limited to just a few specific domains, but extend across a wide range of topics, from everyday life to cultural expressions, social interactions, and even technical and political terminology.

These borrowings can be broadly divided into two main groups: lexical-morphological and thematic. Let us consider each category in more detail.

I. Lexical-morphological classification

1. Lexical borrowings can be:

• **complete**: lexemes completely retain the form and meaning of the source language:

Pikin (Pidgin-English) - a child:

“Vous knowez les maters non>la mama appelle sa fille, elle repeete aussi ce qu on lui a dit, en disant Be careful oooo ma pikin. vous knowez les gos qd elles st amoureuses non? qd la nga m a dit ca j'ai seulement dit "HUM" sans plus. elle me ask hum quoi je lui dis que noooo mami l affaire ci sent le complique” (Camfranglais – a hybrid sociolect, based on French). – *You know the mothers, right? The mom calls her daughter and repeats what she was told, saying “Be careful, oooh my pikin.” You know how girls are when they’re in love, right? When she told me that, I just said ‘HUM’ and nothing more. She asked me ‘HUM what?’ and I told her “Nooo, mommy, this thing sounds complicated.”*¹.

• **partial** borrowings or so-called “**lexical divergents**” or **hybrids**. As a rule, these are verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs formed according to the scheme: “foreign language stem+ native affixes”, for example:

In the territorial variety of French in Cameroon there is a verb **ngrimbahter** – “to practise witchcraft” and an adjective **ngrimbahlique** – “magical”. They were formed on the basis of the noun **ngrimbah** – “witchcraft” (Cameroonian Pidgin English). For example:

“Je pense que nos énergies ngrimbatiques ne doivent pas être gaspillées de la sorte...” (French) – *I believe that our magical energies should not be wasted like this*².

2. Lexical calques (loan translation)

Most scholars make some distinction between calques and borrowings (or loanwords). Borrowing, also known as “direct loan”, is the transfer of both form and meaning. In calques, the meaning is borrowed, and the form is native to the recipient language. Calques represent a significant type of lexical interference that is characteristic of developed bilingualism, where speakers actively engage with both languages.

The most prominent examples can be taken from Cameroonian literary texts created by the authors exposed to the local culture.

The idiom “**to have four eyes**” is a calque from Lamnso language, meaning “*to be a member of a secret society*”:

*“It was there that people who had four eyes gathered at night to form an evil society”*³.

Calques can sometimes result in violations of lexical compatibility, producing expressions that may appear semantically unusual in the target language. For instance, in Mungaka the phrase “to smoke a cigarette” is literally rendered as “**to drink a cigarette**”. As a result, when referring to being too busy to smoke, speakers of this language may say, “*I have no time even to drink a cigarette*” [Blazhevich, 2021, p. 263].

Such examples illustrate how calques transfer the underlying conceptualizations of actions from the source language. This can create striking divergences from standard usage in the target language, leading to expressions that are intelligible only within specific cultural and linguistic context of the source community.

¹ L'integree. 2010. Trahison du gars ou naivete de la fille? Bonaberi forum, May 27, 2010. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=4567&sid=d3c8b6bfa0202645523fe30d8cced4> (accessed: April 19, 2024).

² Gallo V.. 2004. A propos de Platini. Camfoot. URL: https://www.camfoot.com/souslemanguier/index.php?mots_search=ngrimbahlique&rechercher=Ok&debut=266760&lang=francais&skin= (accessed: February 16, 2021).

³ Kongnyuy E. 2012. The Deadly Honey. Yaounde, AMA-CENC. P. 110. cited in Blazhevich Yu.S. 2021. Kontaknye manifestatsii v usloviyah bilingvizma v Kamerune [Contact manifestations in the context of bilingualism in Cameroon]. Dis. ... Doct. Philol Sciences. Belgorod. P. 263.

Both calque and borrowing occur through language contact, but the changes they induce in a language are somewhat different. The increasing number of loanwords leads to a loss of lexical uniqueness of a language, while calques facilitate the expansion of a language's vocabulary using its own linguistic resources [Matveeva, 2002, p. 61].

II. Thematic group classification of borrowings

In the course of our analysis, we have identified ten thematic groups of loanwords drawn from the languages of four distinct cultural areas in Cameroon: Sudano-Sahelian, Fang-Beti, Grassfield, and Coastal Bantu [Blazhevich, 2021, p. 273]. In addition, we have considered borrowings from Cameroonian Pidgin English separately, given its unique role as a widely used lingua franca that both mediates and amplifies lexical exchange. This classification highlights the diverse sources of lexical enrichment of the territorial varieties of English and French in Cameroon. The **thematic groups** are as follows:

1. Plant and animal life, cuisine and beverages.

It should be emphasized that most of the loanwords from local Cameroonian languages in this category refer to the name of plants and animals that are commonly used as food. In many cases, traditional Cameroonian dishes take their names directly from these primary ingredients. To prevent overlapping entries between these thematic areas, we have combined the two categories into a single group.

Here are some examples:

Kilichi from Fulfulde (Fula) also spelled as *kilishi*, *kirichi* is a dish of Northern Cameroon: meat, seasoned and dried so that it can be stored for a long time.

*“Kilishi is delicious with Coca-Cola. Chewy. The strips burn your tongue, work your back gums and scrape off your inner cheeks”*¹.

Miondo, miyondo is a dish made of fermented cassava (lat. *Manihot esculenta*), wrapped in 27 cm long plantain or cane leaves, and steamed for 45 minutes. In the Camfranglais hybrid sociolect, ‘miondo’ refers to someone very thin or skinny:

“J'avais aussi maigri juskaaaaaaaa, on aurait dit que j'étais devenu le miondo. C'était dur, atéééé!” (Camfranglais). – *I also lost much weight, it was like I had become a miondo. It was tough, seriously!*².

The main contribution to this thematic group is made by Cameroonian Pidgin English, the languages of Fang-Beti and Coastal Bantu cultural areas.

2. Clothing and shoes.

Samara (Hausa) – traditional open flip-flops or sandals made of genuine leather, which are produced by local artisans in the north of Cameroon:

“Où trouver des samara à Yaoundé, je suis fou de ces shoes?” (French) – *Where can I find samara in Yaoundé, am I crazy about these shoes?*³.

Gandoura (Fulfulde) – a traditional man's tunic with or without sleeves:

“QUAND TU ES PASSEPARTOUT(tu t'habilles en yor tu donne et tu a la classe tu tchombé en pdg tu a la classe avec un air caillera tu tchombé le gandoura tu es caillera avec grosse classe et respect d'un chef bami)” (Camfranglais) = *“WHEN YOU'RE A JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES (you dress like a Yoruba, you're generous and classy, you hang out like a CEO, you're*

¹ One World: A Global Anthology of Short Stories is a collection of short stories. 2009. Ed. Ch. Brazier. Oxford, New Internationalist. P. 92.

² Mounasawa. 2009. Comment se remettre d'une rupture? Bonaberi forum, November 13, 2009. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=196691&sid=5c7a38e6e06f7c8b8161991cf054754b> (Accessed: May 19, 2025).

³ Yebokolo. 2011. Mode, Make up, Gossip etc. Bonaberi forum, June 5, 2011. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=6048&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=40&sid=9e6a79cd6467e9a0861379f1ad2f001b> (accessed: May 21, 2025).

*classy with a ‘thug’ look, you wear the gandoura, you’re a ‘thug’ with a lot of class and the respect of a Bami [=Bamileke] chief”*¹.

Dschang-shoes / tchanchouss (Cameroonian Pidgin English) – rubber sandals:

This type of footwear used to be crafted from old tires by the inhabitants of Dshang.

*“Dans le grand nord où j’ai été au front pendant 5 ans, les casques, les rangers et gilets ne sont pas porté tout le temps en raison des températures hautes. Vous pouvez le vérifier avec les anciennes photos des forces armées sur le terrain d’il ya 5 à 6 ans. Certains d’entre nous portions des Dschang shoes (Ekambi)”. – In the far north, where I was on the front lines for five years, helmets, boots, and vests are not worn all the time due to the high temperatures. You can verify this with old photos of the armed forces from the field taken five to six years ago. Some of us wore Dschang shoes (Ekambi)*².

Kaba, kabba (Duala) – a long, wide traditional dress worn by the Sawa women:

“Voila donc Vendredi je voulais aller prendre quelque chose dans ma voiture. je sors donc de ma piole en Kaba avec les collants et les babouches” (Camfranglais). – So on Friday I wanted to go and get something in my car. So I get out of my house wearing Kaba in tights and babouches³.

The main contribution to this thematic group is made by the Cameroonian Pidgin English and the languages of the Sudano-Sahelian, Grassfield and Coastal Bantu cultural areas. There are no recorded borrowings from the languages of Fang-Beti.

3. Indigenous institutions, hierarchical titles, and community membership designations.

Doungourou (Fulbe) – servant, subordinate:

“Est-il utile de signaler, que après le match, tous les joueurs furent fouettés à plat ventre devant la chefferie, par les doungourous du chef?” (French) – Is it necessary to point out, that after the match, all the players were whipped on their stomachs in front of the chieftaincy, by the chief’s doungourous?⁴

Mbanya (Bassa) – a wife in a polygamous marriage, refers to horizontal (or peer) “wife-wife” relationship. Synonym of the English *co-wife*, French *co-épouse*:

*With a smile of satisfaction on her lips, the Mother of Ache sat beside her mbanya on the same seat, holding her half glass of wine in her right hand. My whole life’s happiness was in the hands of those two women*⁵.

Njomba (Duala) – a lover, a mistress:

“Hum, la qualité dont tu parles de tes ex njomba aujourd’hui mariées là, j’ai pas l’impression qu’elles se sont fatiguées du romantisme là.. 😊” (French) – Um, the quality you’re talking about of your njomba exes now married there, I don’t feel like they’ve gotten tired of the romance there⁶.

The main contribution to this thematic group is made by the languages of Coastal Bantu and Grassfield cultural areas, and Cameroonian Pidgin English. We have also found some borrowings from the languages of Sudano-Sahelian and Fang-Beti cultural areas.

¹ Potomitan. 2010. La tenue vestimentaire dans un couple. Bonaberi forum, February 20, 2010. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=220626&sid=5450db9bf5d3f2942af10dc3fddbd43b> (accessed: May 19, 2025).

² Aloys P. 2018. Cameroun, Exécutions extrajudiciaires des populations civiles par l’armée : Un officier de l’armée camerounaise démontent les arguments de Issa Tchiroma. Camer.be, 23.07.2018. URL: <https://www.camer.be/69080/11/1/cameroun-cameroun-exaccusions-extrajudiciaires-des-populations-civiles-par-l39armace-un-officier-de-l39armace-camerounaise-dacmontent-les-arguments-de-issa-tchiroma.html> (accessed: May 26, 2025).

³ Foxyforever. 2011. Les pannes du quotidien. Bonaberi forum, February 12, 2011. URL: [https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=5686&start=80&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=\(accesse d: 26 May, 2025\).](https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=5686&start=80&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=(accesse d: 26 May, 2025).)

⁴ Nouvelles du Cameroun. 2021. Belgium, Magellan & Cie Éditions. 152 p.

⁵ Kumengisa R.C. 2016. Okafor Meets His Match and Other Stories. Denver, Bamenda, Spears Media Press. P. 22.

⁶ Mounasawa. 2008. Les Ex. Bonaberi forum, November 06, 2008. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=534&start=40&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=> (accessed: June 02, 2025).

4. Traditional beliefs, religious rites, mythology.

Tob'asi, tobasi, tobosi, tobo-asi (Ewondo and Bulu) – witchcraft, love potion (can be added to food and drinks):

“Some of her friends had come to explain her almost incomprehensible attachment to him, with the suggestion Emmanuel was using charms and amulets of especial potency – tobo-asi – to blind her to reality and to keep alive her infatuation for him”¹.

Mungang (Pidgin English) – magic, witchcraft:

“You are such a bush woman. What do you take me for? I saw what I saw. It was mungang all right. Right in front of me and the others.” He grinned. “You should have seen the look on the white manager's face. I could tell he was scared out of his wits. Mama burst out laughing. “I guess they will start treating workers right for a change, or else MUNGANG go catch them!”².

Mami wata, mamy wata (Pidgin English) – a mermaid, a siren; an attractive girl, a prostitute:

“Comment peut on parler des waka de kribi sans faire allusion aux mami water? c'est surprenant; parmis les waka de la ville de kribi, il ya bel et bien des “fake one”, des mami water qui se transforment en jeune fille la nuit pour aller chercher les beaux garcons dans la rue, les bars et BT [=Boite de Nuit]; aucun ressortissant de kribi ne me dementira; a bon entendeur salut (French). – How can we talk about the waka [=prostitutes] of kribi without alluding to mami water? it is surprising; among the waka of the city of kribi, there are indeed “fake one”, mami, who turn into a young girl at night to look for the handsome boys in the street, bars, and nightclubs; no citizen of kribi will dement me; a good word of greeting³.

The largest percentage of loanwords in this group are from Cameroonian Pidgin English and from languages of Fang-Beti and Grassfield cultural areas.

5. Traditional music and art.

Mbaglum (Akum) – traditional music and dance of North-West region:

“Members of Mr. Biya's party demand and receive bribes, they blackmail, they petition, they threaten, they issue veiled threats, they visit the soothsayers, they loot, they embezzled, they ransack, they grab, they exploit, they pilfer, they shake down banks, they bring in muscle and they play mbaglum dance tunes on the cash registers”⁴.

Mangambeu / Magambo (Medumba) – indigenous music and dance of the Bamileke people:

“Aussitot en place, ils crierent << ajimbeu >> et le public, comme y avait été préparé repondit <<ewaaa>>. Cet échange pris fin apres trois <<ajimbeu>> auxquels suivrent autant de <<ewaaa>> et les jeunes se mirent a danser et chanter au rythme du mangambeu” (French). – Immediately in place, they shouted “ajimbeu”, and the audience, as they had been prepared, responded with “ewaaa”. This exchange ended after three “ajimbeu” calls, each followed by an equal number of “ewaaa” responses, and the young people began to dance and sing to the rhythm of the mangambeu⁵.

Assiko (Bassa) is a genre of music and a style of dance:

“figurez vous que pr la fête du 20 mai à toulouse il y a 2 affiches prévues le même jour. L'une des affiches faite par l'association des camerounais avec des demos d'assiko entre autre prévoit une soir ... (French)” – imagine that for the May 20th party in toulouse there are 2 posters scheduled for the same day. One of the posters made by the association of Cameroonians with demos of assiko among others provides for an evening...⁶.

¹ Nyamnjoh F.B. 2008. Souls forgotten. Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG. P. 132.

² Yenika V.S. 2008. Plantation stories and Rhymes from Cameroon. Lincoln, iUniverse, 80 p.

³ Pat Versace. 2006. Et les mami water. Bonaberi forum, November 27, 2006. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/artdist.php?aid=2754> (accessed: June 02, 2025).

⁴ Ofege N. 2006. Corruption in Cameroon: A State of the Art. The Post Watch Magazine, February 26, 2006. URL: <https://chiefnwaco.wordpress.com/07/15/corruption-in-cameroon-a-state-of-the-art/> (accessed: February 16, 2024).

⁵ Nfongoa D. 2021. Retour au village. Paris, Librinova. 157 p.

⁶ Mimi. 2008. Ich!! les kmers ne pensent qu'à leurs intérêts!! Bonaberi forum, May 20, 2008. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=173&highlight> (accessed: June 02, 2025).

Most entries in this group are from the languages of Grassfield, Coastal Bantu and Fang-Beti cultural areas. Some loanwords come from the languages of Sudano-Sahelian cultural area and Cameroonian Pidgin English.

6. Sports and games.

Ndamba (Ewondo) – ball, football; match:

“*Gars c'est la vie, le ndamba c'est d'abord le way du peuple, le peuple respire par le ndamba et a le droit de critiquer !*” (French). – “*Guys, it's life, ndamba is one of the most important things for people, people breathe with ndamba and have the right to criticize!*”¹.

Nzôlô, nzoloh, nzollo (Pidgin English) – seeping of a ball between the legs in football:

“*We played a goalless final against France for ninety minutes. But the young Eto'o had a wonderful game and made a fool of the French defenders especially Marcel Desailly, twice seeping the ball through his feet (nzoloh) even though he didn't score*”².

This group mostly consists of the loanwords from Cameroonian Pidgin English and the languages of Fang-Beti cultural area.

7. Abstract concepts.

Ndjoo, njoh, njooh, njo (Duala) – gratitude; gift; free:

“*Quelqu'un a gagné des millions et des millions durant 4 ans avec un club et on parle d'ingratitude ?! Il travaillait “njooh” au barça ?*” (French). – “*Someone earned millions and millions for 4 years with a club, and we're talking about ingratitude?! Was he working for 'nothing' at Barça (=Barcelona)?*”³.

Nyanga (Beti) – beauty, elegance, chic:

“*Happy birthday ma puce, que cette journée soit remplie de joie et plein d'ondes positives. Fais toi nyanga et descend une bonne bouteille de champ à ma santé. Plein plein de bisous bisous sucrés*” (French). – “*Happy birthday, my little one. May this day be filled with joy and lots of positive vibes. Dress up and enjoy a good bottle of champagne in my honor. Lots and lots of sweet kisses*”⁴.

Wahala (Pidgin English) – a problem, a trouble:

In Camfranglais: (user Magne) *mais le pb c ke la nga va penser kel est ta nga avt mm d'avoir kiep. tu vois non? c la ou les wahala commencent.* – *But the problem is that the girl will think that she is already your girlfriend even before everything starts with you. Don't you understand? That's where the problems begin* [Blazhevich, 2021, p. 337].

Njakri (Pidgin English) – a joke:

“*Later on, I would come to understand that it was this Germany-Austria njakri that led fifa to decree that all last group matches must be played simultaneously henceforth*” [Blazhevich, 2021, p. 337].

Most loanwords in this group are from Cameroonian Pidgin English. Some entries are from the languages of Coastal Bantu and Fang-Beti cultural areas.

8. Nicknames.

Maguida (*Fulfulfde*) – a person from the North; a Muslim; a grocer:

“*Ainsi, en un temps record, Boko Haram (si ce n'est déjà fait) entre au Nord et commence à attaquer les chrétiens. Je ne pense pas que les enflammés des églises évangéliques et même certains cathos vont laisser les maguida de Yaoundé en paix*”

¹ Djomang de Bayangam. 2010. Eto'o Milla, je wanda! Bonaberi, 31.05.2010. URL: https://www.bonaberi.com/ar,djomang_de_bayangam_eto_o_milla_je_wanda_,7801.html (accessed: February 15, 2021).

² Remembering Marc Vivien Foe (Adieu Marco). 2013. Writerphilic, June 26, 2013. URL: <http://nkiachaatemnkeng.blogspot.com/2013/06/remembering-marc-vivien-foe-adieu-marco.html> (accessed: February 16, 2024).

³ Richard Roy. 2008. Eto'o ou la memoire courte des journalistes. Bonaberi forum, July 27, 2008. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/artdist.php?aid=4679> (accessed: February 16, 2024)

⁴ Babycat2. 2012. Joyeux anniversaire à toi ma madre Athalie. Bonaberi forum, September 06, 2012. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=389561&sid=4683dbefc70020e56089a4923897191c> (accessed: May 26, 2025).

(French). – “*Thus, in record time, Boko Haram (if it hasn't already done so) enters the North and begins attacking Christians. I don't think the officials of evangelical churches and even some Catholics will leave the Magida in peace*”¹.

Nangaboko (*Duala*) – a homeless person:

“*Et qu'on dise que je suis nanga boko ou que je suis trop kwat, aka moi quoi dedans je m'en fous. Allez taper vos styles à la bringue, moi je vais m'amuser mon ami*” (Camfranglais). – “*And let them say that I'm a nanga boko (= dressed poorly as a homeless person) or that I'm too kwat (=fashionable), whatever, I don't care. Go and show off your styles at the party, I'm going to have fun, my friend*”².

Mbout (*Duala*) – drunk; silly:

“*J'ai seulement dit que haaaaan. Je suis back rebrancher le téléphone de mon bureau que j'avais débranché. Et j'entendais les collègues me lap grave. Gars je me suis senti mbout jusqu'à je me demandais en moi même que comment je suis bête comme ca massa*” (French). – “*I only said haaaaan. I'm back reconnecting the phone from my office that I had unplugged. And I could hear my colleagues talking about me seriously. Man, I felt so embarrassed that I was wondering to myself how I could be so silly like that, man*”³.

Koni-eye (Pidgin-English) – a one-eyed person:

“*Elle m'a demandé si je sais que tout Foumbot affirme que [le] koni-eye là est un grand maître sorcier. Je lui ai dit que je pense que tout ce qui se raconte sur le koni-eye a un seul début: la malchance*” (French). – “*She asked me if I knew that all the Fumbos claim that that the one-eyed is a great sorcerer. I told him that, in my opinion, everything that is said about the one-eyed always begins the same way: with bad luck*”⁴.

Almost half of all entries in this group are from Cameroonian Pidgin English, while the rest are from the four cultural areas, primarily from the Sudano-Sahelian one.

9. Economic domain.

Njangi (Pidgin English) – mutual aid fund among the Grassfield peoples:

“*Answer me quickly or else I'll go and do njangi with the Republicans*”⁵.

Okada (Pidgin English) – a motorbike taxi:

“*This message is for you, the pupil in primary school, the student in college, polytechnic and university, and for you the graduate seeking employment, you the Okada driver forced by circumstances struggling to make ends meet or you who is employed but not yet receiving salary, a common phenomenon under la Republique du Cameroun*”⁶.

Feyman (Pidgin English) – a conman, a scammer, a charlatan:

(newspaper headline) *Un gigolo-feyman de Paris escroque une camerounaise en Allemagne* (French). – A Parisian gigolo-conman scams a Cameroonian woman in Germany.

¹ Nji. 2011. Un Rwanda puissance 10 se prépare-t-il au Cameroun? Bonaberi forum, September 21, 2011. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=6331&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=60&sid=1ba95708ea4ec1ce98a7c9d6dc7709a4> (accessed: May 26, 2025).

² Elan D'Anjou De PimPim. 2011. Wouooo Ga fou OOOOh !!! Bonaberi forum, September 12, 2011. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=6138&start=20&sid=29c57b3c7f137392a51b3f75260e5518> (accessed: May 26, 2025).

³ Elan D'Anjou De PimPim. 2010. Vos plus grosses conneries. Bonaberi forum, September 12, 2010. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=5468> (accessed: May 26, 2025).

⁴ Njanke M.K. 2013. Les femmes mariées mangent déjà le gésier: racontages. Yaoundé, Cameroun, Editions Ifrikiya. P. 51.

⁵ Nyanbock. 2012. Lettre de Paul Biya a Barack Obama. Bonaberi forum, May 07 2012. URL: [bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7324&highlight=&sid=1af1678dfd938d6b9ecc4e9f10be35fe](https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7324&highlight=&sid=1af1678dfd938d6b9ecc4e9f10be35fe) (accessed^ May 26, 2025).

⁶ Message to British Southern Cameroons students on the occasion of student cultural week. 2015. Camer.be. August 24, 2015. URL: <https://www.camer.be/44774/30:27/cameroun-message-to-british-southern-cameroons-students-on-the-ocassion-of-student-cultural-week-julyaugust-2015-cameroun.html?lang=en&pr=304066&q=economic-community-of-west-african-states-ecowas-and-arab-republic-of-egypt-explore-possibilities-for-greater-cooperation-in-peace-and-security> (accessed: May 26, 2025).

Cameroonian Pidgin English exhibits a remarkable ability to extend beyond informal interaction to encompass significant sectors, including the economic domain. It serves as a lingua franca in Cameroon, enabling effective communication between the people from different linguistic backgrounds. The dominance Cameroonian Pidgin English entries in this group is also due to the limited lexical scope of many Cameroonian languages. This limitation reflects their historical development in non-industrial environments, where the existing vocabulary adequately met traditional communicative needs but fails to address the complex conceptual requirements of the modern world.

10. Scientific domain.

Cam-no-go (Pidgin English) means a skin infection caused by an animal parasite:

“Le cam no go se soigne mais il laisse des boutons” (French). – “*The cam-no-go can be treated but it leaves bumps*”¹.

Fever grass (Pidgin English) Lat. *Cymbopogon citratus* (Pidgin English) – a medicinal plant lemongrass:

“*When Angelina came down with a fever, some days later, Blessing rushed to her library and pulled out her copy of Where There Is No Doctor. She supplemented the recommended treatment with her mother's: a bath in an effusion of fever grass, after which she smeared the child's body with some unguents and then offered her several steamy cupfuls of infused fever grass*”².

Masepo (Pidgin English) Lat. *Ocimum gratissimum* (Pidgin English) – a medicinal plant basil:

“*His wife and children had spent all evening and the early part of the night rushing out in the unabating rain to the backyard kitchen, to boil masepo and fever grass for him*”³.

Most loanwords in this group are from Cameroonian Pidgin English.

The examination of how Cameroonian languages influence the vocabulary of the territorial varieties of French and English allows us to conclude that only Cameroonian Pidgin English effectively encompasses all functional domains. Numerous lexical borrowings from this Creole have become commonly used terms used not only in gastronomy, but also in medicine, and pharmacy.

Nonetheless, the study reveals that vocabulary entries from the Fang-Beti and Coastal cultural areas are present in eight out of the ten categories, highlighting their extensive influence across multiple areas of vocabulary. Similarly, loanwords from the Grassfield and Sudano-Sahelian languages, which appear in seven and five categories respectively, demonstrate that these cultural areas also play an important role in shaping the linguistic landscape. This distribution underscores the complex interplay of languages in Cameroon, where multiple cultural and linguistic influences converge, resulting in a dynamic process of lexical enrichment and adaptation across the territorial varieties of English and French.

Conclusion

The findings of this research confirm that extensive lexical borrowing is among the most prominent linguistic outcomes of multilingualism. Many of the loanwords, particularly those that convey unique cultural practices, transcend the boundaries of individual ethnic groups and become part of the broader national cultural heritage.

¹ Nji. 2008. Le sujet où on parle à soi-même (SOPASO) et aux autres. Bonaberi forum, December 05, 2008. URL: <https://www.bonaberi.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=202341&sid=d1776451e91a6d68aba46f4ca5b37187> (accessed: May 26, 2025).

² Ndiyah F. 2011. Blessing. Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing SIG. P. 272.

³ Mbue I. 2016. Behold the dreamers: a novel. New-York, Penguin Random House Publishing Group. P. 300.

Indigenous languages play a central role in the process of reshaping English and French spoken in Cameroon by supplying both lexical items and structural patterns. Cameroon Pidgin English further accelerates and mediates these changes. Being a lingua franca with widespread social reach, it functions as a conduit through which local elements enter both French and English. It also fills a critical gap, performing functions that ethnic languages alone cannot, by creating a flexible and adaptive space that accommodates both local and global influences. At the same time, indigenous vocabularies often fall short in addressing the complex conceptual and technical demands of the modern world, such as terms for science, technology, and contemporary social phenomena. Consequently, they cannot provide lexical items that could be borrowed into French and English in categories such as economics or science.

The vocabulary entries originating from the languages of the Fang-Beti and Coastal Bantu areas can be found in eight of the ten categories, underscoring their extensive influence across multiple lexical domains. Likewise, the loanwords from the languages of Grassfield and Sudano-Sahelian cultural areas, present in seven and five categories respectively, indicate that these cultural areas also play a significant role in shaping Cameroon's linguistic landscape.

These results demonstrate that English and French are not merely transplanted languages. They evolve in an active dialogue with the local environment, incorporating native concepts, expressions, and cultural references. As a result, they become tools not only for communication but also for cultural expression, social interaction, and the construction of Cameroonian identity.

This research deepens our understanding of the distinctive features of the territorial varieties of English and French in Cameroon and offers broader insights into the processes of language contact, borrowing, and variation.

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