



STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF YOUTH LANGUAGES IN CENTRAL AND WEST AFRICA: FOCUS ON CAMFRANGLAIS AND NAIJA SLANG

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Abstract

This study investigates the emergence and evolution of youth languages in two neighboring African nations: Cameroon, located in Central Africa, and Nigeria, situated in West Africa. The focus is on Camfranglais, a vernacular language spoken in Cameroon that combines elements from Cameroonian French, Cameroonian English, Cameroonian Pidgin English, and indigenous languages of Cameroon. Camfranglais is a hybrid sociolect primarily used by young people in restricted social settings, such as schools, universities, and informal gatherings. Alongside Camfranglais, the study analyzes Naija Slang, a vibrant youth language in Nigeria that draws heavily from English, Nigerian Pidgin English, and various Nigerian languages. Naija Slang has evolved rapidly, becoming a significant force in Nigerian popular culture, influencing music, film, and social media. Employing a comparative framework, this study employs linguistic and socio-linguistic methods in examining the linguistic features of Camfranglais and Naija Slang, including phonological, morphological, and syntactic innovations, such as code-switching, lexical borrowing, and the emergence of new grammatical structures. Furthermore, the study investigates the social functions of these languages, exploring how they facilitate social interaction, foster a sense of belonging within youth communities, and serve as markers of social identity and cultural affiliation. The research highlights the dynamic and creative nature of these youth languages, demonstrating how they reflect the complex interplay of language contact, social change, and cultural identity in contemporary Central and West Africa. By analyzing Camfranglais and Naija Slang, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of youth language practices, their social and cultural significance, and their role in shaping linguistic landscapes, highlighting the importance of language variation and diversity in Central and West Africa. It provides valuable insights into how young people construct language and express identities. The study further identifies new trends and helps to predict the future language development in Central and West Africa. The implication of this study reveals patterns of social inclusion and exclusion. It also highlights the need for inclusive language practices.

Keywords: youths' language, Slang, Camfranglais, Naija Slang

Introduction

The rapid urbanisation and social transformation across Africa have given rise to dynamic linguistic phenomena, particularly among the continent's youth. In Central and West Africa, young people have developed innovative forms of communication that blend elements from multiple languages to reflect their diverse cultural and social environments. This study focuses on two prominent youth languages: Camfranglais in Cameroon and Naija Slang in Nigeria. Camfranglais is a hybrid sociolect that merges Cameroonian French, English, Pidgin English, and indigenous languages, predominantly used in informal settings such as schools and social gatherings. Similarly, Naija Slang, emerging from Nigeria, incorporates English, Nigerian Pidgin, and various indigenous languages, rapidly gaining prominence in popular culture through music, film, and social media.



These youth languages not only serve as tools for everyday communication but also function as powerful markers of identity, creativity, and social belonging among young people (Eyo, 2016). This study observes, analyses and provides insights into how the youth manipulates language in a quest for effective social interaction among themselves.

By examining the linguistic structures and social roles of Camfranglais and Naija Slang, the study aims to shed light on how these languages embody the complex interactions of language contact, social change, and cultural identity in contemporary African societies. Through a comparative analysis, the research contributes to a broader understanding of youth language practices and their significance in shaping the linguistic landscapes of Central and West Africa.

In the context of Africa, youth is classified based on social construct characterised by flexibility and fluidity, especially where there are inadequate resources to support the educational and employment opportunities necessary to effectively integrate young men and women into mainstream society (Eyo, 2016). Youth is a socially defined construction that goes beyond puberty, adolescence and post-adolescence. This means that being a youth in this context is not necessarily biologically based, but rather on social age phase,(Gorke,2023). According to Tyyska (2005), age in Africa, is not a reliable boundary in constructing the category of youth, rather it is the demographic structure, social status, social processes and cultural influence that define this category based on specific cultural idiosyncrasies. It is mainly the socio-economic dynamics that draw the line of transition or delineate the boundary that determines who is a youth.

From the foregoing, it can be said that youth language is not limited to a particular age grade within a certain biological age bracket, rather, it is identifiable by the operations and characteristics of the young population, seen to be within the age range, cultural background, socio-economic status and language preference. The language preference can affect social relationships among the youth. Youth prefers to engage in speaking the language that is socially acceptable among them, hence, the concept of youth language.

The emergence of African youth languages is an undeniable reality that has developed overtime and it is increasingly gaining acceptance and recognition as a medium of expression both in music and media within the regional space. Youth language is crucial for fostering identity, building social cohesion within peer groups, and reflecting cultural dynamics, acting as a marker of belonging and a tool for creativity and expression. According to Eyo (2016), youth is the age of communicative creativity in which language undergo different kinds of changes or manipulation.

African countries are notably identified to be multilingual in nature. This has a tremendous impact on the linguistic and social behaviour of the people, especially the youths. The presence of many languages has significantly influenced the creation of language variations order than the main language. As a result, young people are observed to be manifesting a unique and notable practice within the context of already diverse and multilingual structure in African countries, leading to a language variation that is peculiar to them (Eyo, 2016).

1. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study is anchored on the theory of Sociolinguistics and language change by Gumperz. These theories focus on how language is used in social interaction. Sociolinguistics is a study of language in its social context. It examines how language varies according to social factors and how they are used to create and negotiate social meaning and identity. Youth language is situated within this theory because it is characterised by the quest for communication and social identity among the youths.



The study, furthermore, hinges on the theory of language change propounded by Labov (1966), which explains how and why language evolves over time due to some factors such as interaction with other languages which leads to borrowing. This marks a significant contribution to the study of language change. It highlights important milestones in the development of language change by Ferdinand's (1916) work and Chomsky's (1957) work, which led the foundation for the study of language variation and change. The theory proposes that language change occurs through language contact, where speakers of different languages interact and thereby influences each other's language use. It further emphasises that language change can be influenced by social status, age and identity as well as cultural values and norms. The theory of language change thus encompasses (i) the dynamism of language, (ii) language contact and (iii) language variation. This helps to understand the processes in the evolution of youth language as a result of language contact and hybridisation in African urban centres.

Youth language has evolved rapidly, becoming a significant force in the African continent. This, according to Eyo (2016), is triggered by the combined forces of urbanisation, migration, multilingualism, globalisation and transcultural contacts. The influx of young people with diverse linguistic backgrounds to the city helps to promote multilingualism that lead to unique sociolinguistic behaviour. As young people migrate to urban cities, they learn one or more of the city's languages or possibly 'invent' a unique language given their specific originating social moments. For instance, there are several youth languages in Africa such as Sheng (Kenya), Tsotsitaal (South Africa), Nouchi (Ivory Coast), and most of others evolved as gang languages. Other African youth languages like Camfranglais (Cameroon), and various pidgin language varieties along the West African coasts such as Naija Slang (Nigeria) evolved as the need for cross-linguistic communication. According to Obo and Obuikwu (2022), the urban settings are generally characterised by multi-ethnicity. People migrate from rural surroundings as well as other parts of the country. As a result, there is often need for a common language to make social interaction possible between members of various ethnic and linguistic groups.

The dynamic and creative nature of these youth languages reflect the complex interplay of language contact, social change, and cultural identity in African countries (Hurst-Harosh, 2020). Some youth languages are perceived negatively due to their criminal tendencies. As such, they are often seen as deviant and anti-social. Mensah (2012) reports that the language of the Ágábá boys in Nigeria is basically used to protest against marginalisation of their social existence and to compensate for the failure of traditional society to provide acceptance and identity.

However, youth languages have come to acquire new roles and functions and now assume urban identities (McLaughlin, 2009). They now serve a wide range of functions in urban areas in the media and marketing communication. Mutonya (2008) and Kariuki, Kanana and Kebeya (2015) also report the utility of the language in print and electronic advertising. Youth language is also a medium of broadcasting in youth-initiated radio and television programmes. This is why McLaughlin (2009) contends that a language that is widely used in various contexts and not limited to an informal setting is no longer exclusively youth language but is now expanding its role to become an urban language of wider communication.

Thus, youth languages are developing and fulfilling the demands of communication in many sociolinguistic domains, such as literature, youth-centred cyberspace, media space and advertising, among others. This utility of African youth languages reveals that they are constantly in transition and enhancing their internal resources to meet the challenges of modern society.

Youth language plays a vital role in shaping the social, cultural and economic lives of young people and by extension, the entire country. Thus, its importance cannot be overemphasised. Language helps young people form and express their identities, distinguish themselves from older generations



and establish their own cultural norms. Youth language serves as a common denominator, uniting young people across different ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

2. Methodology

This is a qualitative study which adopted a comparative approach to analyse the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic nature of Camfranglais and Naija Slangs. The data were collected through primary and secondary sources (spoken and written samples, interviews, media content). Using linguistic and sociolinguistic survey, the data collected was compared under phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic analysis.

3. Data presentation

3.1. Linguistic Structure of Camfranglais and Naija Slang

Over the years, Naija Slang as well as Camfranglais have experienced some development in their lexical, phonology, semantic and syntactic features. Both languages display some interesting phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic characteristics which are examined hereafter.

3.1.1. Phonological Features

Camfranglais is characterised by an intriguing phonological system that draws from French, English, Cameroonian Pidgin, and indigenous languages. The adaptation of the standard Latin alphabet to local pronunciation habits results in distinctive sound patterns. Vowels are often simplified, English diphthongs are reduced to monophthongs, and consonants are adjusted to fit local speech norms. Consider the examples below:

(1)

- a. **Kot** (from English “**cut**”)
- b. **Tchop** (to eat; from Pidgin English)
- c. **Broza** (from English “**brother**”);
- d. **mata** (from English “**matter**”);

In Camfranglais, the English word “cut” (1.a) becomes “kot,” pronounced with an “ɔ” sound instead of the English “ʌ.” This demonstrates the adaptation of vowel sounds to local preferences. In the same vein, the word “tchop” in (1.b) is pronounced with a “j” sound at the beginning, reflecting both its Pidgin origin and the tendency to simplify consonant clusters. In (1.c), the “ð” sound in “brother” is replaced by a “z” sound, resulting in “broza.” This substitution occurs because the English interdental fricative [ð] is not present in many Cameroonian languages.

Naija Slang has a phonological system that draws from English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages. The uniqueness of phonology is drawn from the mixture of English and indigenous languages. Let us consider the examples below:

(2)

- a. **Change** is pronounced as **shange**
- b. **Join** is pronounced as **shion**
- c. **Press** is pronounced as **pess**: (the /r/ sound is silent)
- d. **Church** is pronounced as **shursh**.....
- e. **Kitchen** is pronounced as **kishen**

It is observed from the data above that Naija Slang modifies the English phonological structure by simplifying some consonant clusters, often replacing affricates like /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ with the fricative /ʃ/



and softening sounds like /r/. These changes make the sounds more fluid and easier to pronounce which align with local speech rhythms and cultural identity.

3.1.2. Morphological characteristics

Camfranglais exhibits remarkable morphological creativity, frequently blending, truncating, and hybridising elements from French, English, and local languages. Affixation, syllable inversion, and reduplication are commonly used to create new words, as illustrated in the data below:

(3)

- a. **Lomeur** (from “**lom**” meaning “lie” + French suffix “-**eur**”)
- b. **Reback** (from English “**back**” + prefix “**re-**”)
- c. **Nden** (from French “**identité**”)
- d. **Rémé** (from French “**mère**,”); **répé** (from French “**père**”)
- e. **Nayor nayor** (reduplication for emphasis)

The word in (3.a) is formed by combining the root “lom” (to lie) with the French agentive suffix “-eur”, resulting in “lomeur” (liar). It demonstrates the use of French morphological elements in new word creation. In (3.b), the word “reback” “to return something” is created by attaching the French/English prefix “re-” to the English root “back”, illustrating cross-linguistic blending. As far as (3.c) is concerned, the word “den” is a clipped and blended form derived from the French word “identité” (identity card). This example shows truncation and blending in Camfranglais word formation. The word “rémé” and “répé” in (3.d) are created by inverting the syllables of “mère” (mother) and “père” (father), following the French Slang process of verlan. This demonstrates syllable inversion as a creative process. Finally, the repetition of “nayor” intensifies the meaning, resulting in “very slowly.” Reduplication is a common strategy for emphasis or intensity.

As far as Naija Slang is concerned, it creates new words from a combination of indigenous languages and English words. Smith (2011) identifies youth language as one of the most productive resources in contributing new words to standard languages in lexicographic practices. The importance of morphology is to remodel and reshape base language words in new contexts with new or negotiated meanings. In Nigeria, for instance, the development and spread of Nigerian Pidgin is effectively differentiated from city to city, and has been manipulated by young people to create radically distinct linguistic norms and stylistic commonalities (in Naija Hip-Hop culture). The following are some of the examples:

(4)

- a. **Oshofree**: something given to someone without payment: **Osho** is an indigenous (Yoruba) language joined with **free** (an English word)
- b. **Kolomental**: used to refer to someone who is mentally ill. The word is formed by combining pidgin **kolo** “madness” with English word **mental**.
- c. **Kororo-rubber**: used to refer to condom. The word is formed by combining Hausa word (**kororo**) with English word (**rubber**).
- d. **Informate**: coined from the English word and used to refer to information
- e. **Arrangi**: coined from the English word **arrange** to mean stage managed. It could mean connecting two people to marriage without their consent.

The examples provided highlight how Naija Slang blends English with indigenous Nigerian languages and Pidgin, resulting in a dynamic and hybrid form of communication. This linguistic fusion reflects the fluid code-switching habits of Nigerian speakers, who seamlessly mix languages



to create expressions that are culturally resonant and contextually rich. These coinages from English words with Yoruba, Hausa, or Pidgin terms carry meanings that often extend beyond their original English roots, and which adapt to local social realities and experiences. Such blends not only serve as a marker of cultural identity but also allow for more vivid and efficient communication, as they capture nuanced ideas in a way that standard English alone might not. This process demonstrates the inventiveness of Nigerian speakers in shaping their language environment, by producing a vibrant Slang that mirrors the country's multilingual and multicultural landscape.

3.1.3. Syntactic Structures

Camfranglais primarily follows the English-French syntactic patterns. English verbs are often conjugated with French endings to reflect the language's flexibility and creativity. Consider the following:

(5)

a. **La go ci yamo le kongossa.**

The girl this PRS-like the gossip
"This girl likes gossiping" (affirmative).

b. **La go ci ne yamo pas le Kongossa.**

The girl this NEG PRS-like NEG the gossip
"This girl does not like gossiping" (negative).

c. **Vous goez où?**

2PL PRS-go where
"Where are you going?" (interrogation)

d. **Tu lap quoi?**

2SG PRS-laugh what
"Why are you laughing?" (interrogation)

e. **Je go buy le pain.**

1SG PRS-go buy the bread
"I am going to buy some bread."

f. **Vous connaissez qu'il ne run pas vite**

2PL PRS-know that-3SG NEG run NEG quickly
"You know that he does not run quickly".

The sentence in (5.a) follows the English-French subject-verb-object order with mixed vocabulary. In (5.b), the negative sentence uses the French negation "ne...pas". In (5.c), the French pronoun "vous" (you) is combined with the English verb "go" plus the French present tense ending "-ez", followed by "où" (where). The interrogative form demonstrates verb adaptation. The same process is observed in (5.d) with the use of the French pronoun "tu" (you), the English verb "lap" (from "laugh"), and the French question word "quoi" (what). In (5.e), "Je" (I, French) is followed by "go buy" (English verbs) and "le pain" (the bread, French). The sentence shows integration of English verbs in a French syntactic frame.

Finally, the construction in (5.f) features "vous" (you, French), "connaissez" (from English "know" with French ending), and "ne run pas vite" (does not run fast). This structure highlights the use of English verbs with French morphology and syntax.

The syntactic nature of Naija Slang nearly reflects the structure of English language. However, the structure is loaded with pidgin and English language as illustrated hereafter:



- (6)
- a. **Wetin dey** **worry you?**
What PRS-be worry you
"What is your problem?"
- b. **I go shange am for you**
1SG FUT change OM for you
"I will change for you" (You are pissing me off)
- c. **You dey follow me yarn?**
2SG PRS-be follow me QM
"Do you understand me?"
- d. **Wetin dey happen?**
What PRS-be happen
"What is happening?"
- e. **All of una just de yarn okpata-**
All of you just PRS-be talk trash
"All of you are talking trash"
- f. **I wan chop**
1SG PRS-want eat
"I want to eat"
- g. **No shaking**
NEG shaking
"Up to the task"
- h. **The gbege na dilaye**
The fight PRS-be serious
"The fight is serious"
- i. **You no de yarn the odour?**
2SG NEG PRS-be perceive the odour
"Are you not perceiving the odour?"

The sentences above exemplify common structures and idioms found in Naija Slang and Nigerian Pidgin English. Unlike standard English, Naija Slang and Pidgin often use simplified verb conjugations and employ specific lexical items to convey nuanced meanings, as seen in "Wetin de worry you?" for "What is your problem?" or "I go shange am for you" to express irritation. The examples also showcase direct translation of local thought processes into English-based vocabulary, such as "You dey follow me yarn?" directly asking if one understands. Furthermore, they reveal the use of vivid imagery and culturally specific expressions, where terms like "okpata" (trash) or "gbege" (fight) are integrated to create expressive and contextually rich communication. "Opkata" is an Igbo word which refers to someone who is generous, while "gbege" is a Yoruba word which literally means "forest" or "wilderness".

3.1.4. Sources of Vocabulary

The vocabulary of Camfranglais is a rich blend of French, English, Pidgin, and indigenous languages. Words are borrowed, adapted, and newly created to reflect the urban and multilingual environment of Cameroon, as summarised in the table below:

Words	Meanings
Tchop	to eat
Ndock	Greed
Way	Thing, object, or sex (figurative)
Kolo	1,000 francs
Go	girl, girlfriend
nga	Girl, girlfriend, wife



Piol	House
Le proving	to live beyond one's means
Marie ngombe	10,000 francs

Table 1. Illustrative summary of Camfranglais vocabulary

In the table above, borrowed words are widely used in Camfranglais and shows the influence of the original languages on the youth speech. The word **ndok** is locally derived and refers to the concept of greed, as a contribution of creativity. The word “Piol” comes from the French Slang “piaule,” which means “house” or “room.” This example illustrates how French Slang expressions are adapted and integrated into Camfranglais vocabulary. “Le proving” is a creative neologism derived from the English verb “to prove” and refers to living above one's income.

Naija Slang's vocabulary is characterised by borrowing from English, Pidgin English and indigenous languages. Many youths from different parts of Nigeria have developed their own peculiar sociolects, patois or ritualised codes with peculiar vocabulary and recontextualised meanings of words which are borrowed extensively from the immediate languages. The dynamics of youth language is therefore most noticeable in language change and the creation of new words and meaning depending on the location and situation. Selected examples are presented in the table below:

Words	Meanings
Japa	To flee or escape
Sapa	Poverty or hunger
Chai	An exclamation of surprise or disbelief
Wahala	Trouble/Problem
Ehen	Okay, Yes, And so or What?
Amebo	Someone who gossips a lot
Wobia	A glutton
Chop breakfast	To be heartbroken
Ajebo	A pampered child

Table 2. Illustrative summary of Naija Slang's vocabulary

3.1.5. Semantic Characteristics

A defining feature of Camfranglais is its highly connotative and context-dependent semantics. Words frequently acquire new, metaphorical, or euphemistic meanings that diverge from their original sense in French, English, or local languages. This semantic inventiveness allows speakers to communicate covertly, address taboo subjects, and reinforce group identity. Consider the table below:

Word	Denotative meaning	Connotative meaning
<i>Laver</i>	Wash	Have sex
<i>Chat</i>	Cat	random sexual partner
<i>Piment</i>	Pepper	Sex
<i>Pain</i>	Bread	Handsome man

Table 3. Illustrative summary of Camfranglais semantics

In Camfranglais, “laver” is used as a euphemism for “to have sex with someone”. This shift shows how neutral verbs are repurposed to discuss intimate topics in a discreet or humorous way. While the “chat” means “cat” in French, in Camfranglais it refers to a random sexual partner or a prostitute. The term is loaded with connotations of casual or transactional sexual relationships, showing how animal names are re-semanticised. “Piment” is used to denote prostitution or a prostitute. The metaphorical use of “piment” (something spicy or hot) conveys sexual allure, danger, or excitement



associated with the sex trade. In Camfranglais, “pain” refers to a handsome boy or boyfriend. The word draws on the positive, desirable connotations of “bread” as something essential and attractive. This reflects the playful and metaphorical nature of Camfranglais semantics. These examples show that Camfranglais is not only innovative in structure but also in meaning. Semantic shifts serve various communicative purposes: they allow speakers to discuss sensitive topics indirectly, create in-group codes, and display creativity. This connotative richness is one reason Camfranglais resonates so strongly with its youthful speakers and continues to evolve rapidly in urban Cameroon.

These semantic characteristics are also tenable for Naija Slang as summarised in the table below:

<i>Word</i>	<i>Denotative meaning</i>	<i>Connotative meaning</i>
<i>Anyhow, belle face</i>	Whichever direction the stomach faces	Someone playing football and kicks the ball in random direction
<i>Make I near you?</i>	Should I come close?	Anything for the girls?
<i>Water don pass garri-</i>	Water is too much in the garri	The matter has gone out of hand
<i>You too much-</i>	You are exceptional,	A deep appreciation

Table 4. Illustrative summary of Naija Slang’s semantics

3.2.Sociolinguistic Value

Camfranglais is more than a linguistic phenomenon; it is a vibrant social tool that occupies a unique place in Cameroon’s multilingual landscape. Its sociolinguistic value is rooted in the diverse contexts and functions it serves, especially among urban youth. Naija Slang, like Camfranglais, holds significant sociolinguistic value as it serves as a marker of Nigerian identity, culture and shared experience. It is used in informal settings to foster a sense of community and camaraderie among users. Naija Slang showcases linguistic innovation, blending English with local languages and cultural references. It bridges linguistic and cultural divides, facilitating communication across different ethnic and socio-economic groups.

3.2.1. Usage Contexts

Camfranglais thrives in informal settings such as secondary schools, universities, markets, sports fields, and urban neighbourhoods. It is the preferred medium for peer group conversations, street interactions, and social media exchanges, acting as a code of solidarity and in-group identity. Students use Camfranglais to discuss academics and relationships, which allows communication that is not easily understood by teachers or outsiders. Vendors and customers use Camfranglais to negotiate prices or share jokes to reinforce a shared urban youth culture. Young Cameroonians use Camfranglais in WhatsApp chats, Facebook posts, and TikTok videos, and most increasingly in the musical genre “le mbolè”.

Naija Slang is commonly used in various contexts such as informal conversations among friends, family and peers. It is also widely used in social media plat forms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Naija Slang is widely used in music, comedy and entertainment. It serves as a key part of youth culture in Nigeria and reflects their creativity, humour and identity. The speakers have a community of practice such as music, dress sense or fashion, sports, initiation rituals and a whole social universe that transports their ideas and makes up their world.



3.2.2. Social Functions

The primary social function of Camfranglais is to foster a sense of belonging and group identity among young people. It serves as a marker of modernity, urban sophistication, and resistance to linguistic and social authority. By speaking Camfranglais, youths assert their difference from both the French-speaking and English-speaking mainstream, as well as from the older generation, who may view the language as subversive or non-standard.

Camfranglais is also a tool for humour, creativity, and linguistic play. Speakers enjoy inventing new words, twisting meanings, and using the language to express attitudes and emotions that might be difficult to convey in standard French or English. It is sometimes used as a secret code to exclude outsiders or adults from private conversations. A group of friends might switch to Camfranglais to discuss sensitive topics or poke fun at each other. This reinforces their bonds and shared identity. Students may deliberately use Camfranglais in the presence of teachers or parents to exclude them from conversations or to challenge linguistic norms.

On the other hand, in West Africa, Naija Slang has a profound impact on the social identity of Nigerian youths. It is a way for them to express themselves and showcase their creativity, and connect with others who share similar experiences and cultural backgrounds. It brings about social bonding, group membership in a particular social group or community. The multi-lingual and multi-cultural situation in Nigeria facilitates the use of Naija Slang among the youths as a means of communication. This plays a unification role and serves as an identification marker. It further provides networking opportunities through valuable connections. It broadens different perspectives due to the interaction with people from diverse cultural background, and helps to maintain meaningful relationships, which are essential for emotional and psychological well-being of the youths.

3.2.3. On Code-Mixing and Code-Switching

A defining feature of Camfranglais is its fluid code-mixing and code-switching, both within sentences and across conversational turns. Speakers effortlessly blend French, English, Pidgin English, and indigenous languages, often within a single utterance. This linguistic agility reflects not only the multilingual background of Cameroonian youth but also their desire to showcase creativity and adaptability. Consider the example below:

(7) Je go buy le pain.
1SG PRS-go buy the bread
“I am going to buy bread”

The speaker combines French (“Je”), English (“go buy”), and French again (“le pain”) in a single sentence. This seamless blending is typical of Camfranglais and signals both linguistic competence and group membership. With respect to code-switching, a conversation may begin in standard French but switch to Camfranglais when the topic becomes more personal or informal, or when speakers wish to signal solidarity or secrecy.

In brief, the strategic use of code-mixing and code-switching allows Camfranglais speakers to navigate different social worlds, negotiate identities, and manage relationships. It also enables them to draw on the expressive resources of multiple languages to enrich their communicative repertoire. The common strategies employed by Nigerian urban youth language is code-switching and code-mixing, borrowing and other trans-idiomatic practices. This presents a prominent feature of Naija Slang among Nigerian youth and reflects the country’s multilingual reality where speakers regularly navigate between Standard English, Pidgin English and indigenous languages (Adegbija, 2004). A comparison of key characteristics of Camfranglais and Naija Slang is summarised in the table below:



Aspect	Camfranglais (Cameroon)	Naija Slang (Nigeria)
Linguistic Sources	French, English, Pidgin, local languages	English, Pidgin, Nigerian languages
Main Contexts	Schools, youth gatherings, Pop culture, social media	Schools, youth gatherings, Pop culture, social media
Social Functions	Group identity, creativity	Popular culture, identity
Innovations	Code-switching, hybrid grammar	Lexical creativity, media influence

Table 5. Comparison of key characteristics of Camfranglais and Naija Slang

4. Findings

The study reveals that Camfranglais and Naija Slang are youth language innovations that are peculiar to youth, whose language practices are a totality of their repertoires, which are not consistent, clear and bound by any rule. This evidence shows that African youth languages are contested locally, although they are clearly a distinct means of communication with their community of speakers, who relies mainly on context to convey meaning. Reynolds and Chun (2013) in Eyo (2016) refer to this ‘differentiated identities and collective belonging’. The study also reveals patterns of social inclusion and exclusion. Both Camfranglais and Naija Slangs are used as lingua franca to facilitate communication, especially among the youths due to their multilingualism. It was observed that both of them blend local languages and foreign languages, and are used in casual conversations popularly among the younger generations. While Camfranglais combine French, English and local languages, Naija Slang incorporates English, Nigerian languages and other influences.

Furthermore, the phonology of Camfranglais is influenced by the phonology of local Cameroonian languages, French and English, by adopting the sounds and intonation patterns of these languages such as the use of clicks or implosives found in some Cameroonian languages. Naija Slang phonology, on the other hand, is largely based on Nigerian English phonology with influences from indigenous languages with distinct pronunciation patterns, such as variations in vowel sounds or syllable stress. The same scenario of influences from the local languages is observed in the areas like syntax, vocabulary and semantic characteristics of both Camfranglais and Naija Slang.

It is, however, worthy of note that the semantics of Naija Slang is highly contextual and often relies on shared cultural knowledge. That is, words and expressions can have multiple meanings depending on the situation. New terms always emerge frequently also, to reflect changing social realities. In a nutshell, both Camfranglais and Naija Slang demonstrate the dynamic nature of language use in multilingual communities, where speakers creatively combine linguistic resources to express identity, culture, and social relationships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has reviewed the theoretical aspects of linguistic situations of youth languages in Cameroon and Nigeria. The analysis revealed that Camfranglais and Naija Slangs have dynamic phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic characteristics. Their sociolinguistic behaviour and creativity are linked to the influence of English, French and indigenous languages. The understanding of the uniqueness of youth language structures and functions help to achieve a more tolerant view and appreciate youth cultural mobility and linguistic production as essential components of our social existence. The study therefore concludes that youth language should be given a chance to thrive in the linguistic landscapes of Central and West Africa because it offers a fascinating medium for effective social interaction among the youths and serves a significant role in shaping the social, emotional and cognitive development of young people. It therefore recommends



that government should set up a linguistic body to manage the linguistic situation experienced in Central and West Africa. There should be an inclusive language policy that will incorporate youth language into the mainstream of public and private activities. This will serve as a language that unifies linguistic diversity. The creation of meaning is therefore one of the noticeable linguistic components of youth languages in Africa. It is informed by connections with social changes and cross-generational transformations which reflect the fluid and dynamic nature of their linguistic practices, presentation of the language: origin, evolution, and linguistic characteristics music, film, and social media.

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