

SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF YOUTH FULFULDE SLANGS IN THE ADAMAHA HIGHLANDS OF CAMEROON

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Abstract: This article sheds light on features of youth Fulfulde slangs in the Adamawa Highlands of Cameroon. It shows how users construct social identities in their various interactions. The study focuses on social categorisations, word formation processes and sociolinguistic roles reflected in the selected in-group terms. Data were collected from twenty youths in the urban city of Ngaoundere through interviews. The analysis of obtained slangs followed Eastman (1985) theoretical consideration. It emerged from the significant findings that those youths coined words to allude to personality, physical traits, sexual concerns, body parts, crime, violence, drugs, religious obedience, origin, drinks, objects, location, age and sex difference. The newly invented vocabularies are combined through processes such as coinage, affixation, hypersynonymy, compounding, reduplication and semantic shift. Users in their constructions establish difference between them and others. Their linguistic behaviour aimed at reducing others; making distinction between the rich and the poor, youths and adults; concealing secrets from out-groups; committing cynical and criminal acts or sounding original in front of their peers.

Keywords: Adamawa Highlands, Cameroon, Fulfulde, Slang, Social Identities

ANALYSE SOCIOLINGUISTIQUE DU ARGOT FULFULDE DANS LES PLATEAUX DE L'ADAMAOUA DU CAMEROUN

Résumé : Cet article met en lumière les caractéristiques de l'argot fulfulde des jeunes dans les hauts plateaux de l'Adamaoua au Cameroun. Il montre comment les utilisateurs construisent des identités sociales dans leurs diverses interactions. L'étude met l'emphase sur les catégorisations sociales, le processus de formation des mots et les fonctions sociolinguistiques qu'incarnent les choix effectués. Les données ont été collectées auprès de vingt jeunes dans la cité urbaine de Ngaoundéré par le biais d'entretiens. L'analyse des données collectées s'est inspirée du cadre théorique d'Eastman (1985). Il ressort des résultats significatifs que ces jeunes ont inventé des mots pour faire référence à la personnalité, aux traits physiques, aux préoccupations sexuelles, aux parties du corps, au crime, à la violence, aux drogues, à l'appartenance religieuse, à l'origine, aux boissons, aux objets, à l'emplacement, à l'âge et au sexe. Les vocabulaires nouvellement inventés sont obtenus à travers des procédés tels que le néologisme, l'affixation, l'hypersynonymie, la composition, la reduplication et le glissement sémantique. Dans leurs constructions, les utilisateurs établissent une différence entre eux et les autres. Leur comportement linguistique vise à réduire les autres, à faire la distinction entre les riches et les pauvres, les jeunes et les adultes, à cacher des informations aux groupes extérieurs, à perpétrer des actes cyniques et criminels ou à paraître original devant leurs pairs.

Introduction

Cameroon is a plurilingual nation which showcases an incredible number of languages or dialects used in different settings. Those languages are categorised as official languages (French, English), foreign languages (Spanish, German, Chinese, Italian, and Arabic), lingua francas (Fulfulde, Pidgin English, Camfranglais, Shuwa Arabic, Ewondo) and native languages, which are yet to get the status of national languages. Fulfulde as a language of wider communication is a Fulani dialect which belongs to the Niger-Congo family of languages in the West Atlantic (Harrison, 2003). The language is disseminated in eighteen countries across Africa. In West Africa, it is found in Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Benin, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia and Niger. In the Central part of Africa, Fulfulde is present in Cameroon, Chad and Central African Republic. In North Africa, it is located in Sudan and Mauritania. In Cameroon, Fulfulde is widely used in the Greater North, which includes the Far-North, the North and the Adamawa. In the Adamawa Highlands, Fulfulde competes with local dialects which influence it lexically, morphologically and semantically. Interestingly, the Cameroonian Government gave it a prominent place in the domain of education with regard to the promotion of national languages and cultures. Thus, Fulfulde is taught in schools of Greater North in this perspective. Additionally, programmes in Fulfulde are broadcast through the media; the language is used in church sermons, in the streets, in markets and in administration as well, especially among natives, according to affinity with participants. Noteworthy, the dialect is not uniform as it moves from the Adamawa to the Far-North region of Cameroon.

Aim of the Study

This paper explores Fulfulde slangs used among youths in the Adamawa highlands of Cameroon in the urban city of Ngaoundere, in particular. It is a sociolinguistic study which examines the social categorization of in-group choices, formation processes and the social identities constructed.

Problem Statement

Fulfulde slangs remain an underexplored area in the Cameroonian context. Scholarship on language varieties, language change and use in the country widely explored Cameroon Pidgin English and Camfranglais. Fulfulde dialect in the Adamawa region is under the influence of indigenous languages and youth idiolects which generate linguistic features, without uniformity, seen as anti-languages, odd and ephemeral. The newly created linguistic variants undergo semantic shifts or extensions which are unstable and unintelligible to out-groups.

Research Questions

The following research questions would guide the research.

- 1) What are the social categorisations of in-group slangs and topics?
- 2) What are the formation processes of the vernacular forms coined?
- 3) What are the social identities reflected in the newly created words?

Significance of the Study

This synchronic study on slangs demonstrates that the linguistic substratum of Fulfulde as any other natural occurring language is subject to regional and social variations. This research is foundational in Fulfulde dialect and varieties in the Northern Cameroon. It enriches scholars' contributions on the development of native languages and dialects in the country. More importantly, it shows how in-group linguistic choices help people construct self-identities.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Sociolinguistics

Linguists have given several definitions of sociolinguistics whose ideas somewhat converge. For instance, Holmes (2013, p.1) states that sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. According to this definition, sociolinguistics shows how language choices are influenced by environmental factors such as the participants involved in interactions, the setting, the topic and the purpose of communication. Extensively, Wardhaugh (2006, p.13) claims that sociolinguistics is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and of how languages function in communication. Thus, the concern of sociolinguistic is to establish the link between language use and society, demonstrating how gender, class, status, ethnicity, age, race, etc., influence people talks. It also highlights the underlying social functions performed by speakers in their speech acts.

Some linguists have established a distinction between sociolinguistics or micro-sociolinguistics and the sociology of language or macro-sociolinguistics. Coulmas (1997, p. 2) says that

micro-sociolinguistics investigates how social structure influences the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlate with social attributes such as class, sex, and age. Macro-sociolinguistics, on the other hand, studies what societies do with their languages, that is, attitudes and attachments that account for the functional distribution of speech forms in society, language shift, maintenance, and replacement, the delimitation and interaction of speech communities.

Wardhaugh (2006, p.14) stresses that there is a sharp division between the two but they have a large area of common concern. In short, sociolinguists are interested in explaining why people speak differently in different social contexts, and they are concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. The sociolinguistic analysis of youth Fulfulde slangs in the framework of this study falls within micro-sociolinguistics.

1.2. Slang, Characteristics and Functions

Slang is more a sociological than a purely linguistic idea and is best understood in the theory of modern society and culture (Allen, 1998). Slangs as markers of social differences generally emerge within small speech communities before expanding to larger groups. They are usually seen as speech of in-groups, subcultures, unconventional and informal vocabulary used in the contemporary society.

Greenman (2002, p.410) remarks that 'slang is language born out of the mainstream, the product of subgroups of people, among them teenagers, students, racial, religious and ethnic minorities, rock and jazz musicians, prisoners, soldiers and gangsters. Each is a group whose members spend a lot of time in each other's company, living lives often isolated or filled with turmoil, uncertainty, tension, innovation or rebellion. Slang is the group's verbal distinction.'" Slang is therefore a sociolinguistic phenomenon peculiar to members of a speech community, especially youths, where speakers in informal situations use special vocabularies or phrases whose understanding are restricted to the members of the group to perform social purposes. Slangs are dynamic, transient, ephemeral and anti-norms. Today, they are common in everyday interactions.

Yanchun and Yanhong (2013) identified three functions of slangs as follows: pursuit of self-identity, emotive feeling of the slang users and achieving politeness.

According to Partridge (1933), people use slang for any of at least 15 reasons which are:

1. To express the strong spirits of pleasure and light-heartedness of the youth.
2. As an outlet for one's sense of humour or as an exercise in wit. The motive may be either petty snobbery or self-display; or neutral emulation; or creditable—a delight in one's audience, or in one's own virtuosity.
3. To be different from others, to be individual.
4. To speak or to write picturesquely, whether by a vigorous graphic self-expression or from the desire to avoid the dull, the trite and the insipid.
5. To startle someone or to be forceful and arresting.
6. To distinguish slang from clichés.
7. To speak or to write more economically, more briefly and concisely.
8. To invent a new word, or to invest an old word with a vividly new sense.
9. To convert abstraction into something concrete and solid; to invest the temporally remote with immediacy, the spatially remote with contiguity, the ethereal with earthiness; and to reduce the spiritual, especially the idealistic, to the materialistic.
10. To break or to reduce the excessive gravity of the conversation or the pomposity of a written piece; to mitigate a refusal or a rejection.
11. To place oneself on a mental or moral or emotional level with one's audience or on a friendly level with one's subject matter.
12. To promote the simplicity in social communication, or to tighten the friendship.
13. To hint or imply something that one belongs or has belonged, for example, a certain school or university, a certain profession and trade; to indicate that one is an insider of a certain subgroup.
14. To prove or to identify that one is an outsider of a certain subgroup.
15. To be mysterious and understandable only with difficulty; to create a secret code that can be understood only among a specific group.

1.3. Slangs and Social Identity

Slangs are a social phenomenon found in many languages among different groups of people with different linguistic behaviours. They play various social roles in the lives of users and greatly influence society. People use them to construct shades of identities in different social interactions such as class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual

orientation, age, attraction, rejection, etc. with all the implications of deviance and inadequacy from sociolinguistic perspective. Norton (2013) theorizes identity as the way one understands his or her relationship with the world and how that relationship is constructed across space and time. Block (2006) explains that it is socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narrative as an individual performs, interprets, and projects in dress, bodily movement, actions, and language. Social identity involves participants' roles, positions, relationships, reputations, and other dimensions of social personae, which are conventionally linked to affective and epistemic stances (Ochs & Capps 1996). People tend to differentiate themselves from others classifying them in various social categories. The difference between slang features which characterise the speech of users is entirely arbitrary. Fulfulde slang is a product of society; it is created and articulated by people who live in the society.

1.4. *Slangs in Cameroon*

The contribution of Cameroonian scholars on slang studies rests on Camfranglais and Pidgin English.

Kouega (2003) showed insights into Camfranglais in secondary schools of the country. He analysed sample of Camfranglais texts and semantic domains then came out with the findings that secondary school pupils used it among themselves to exclude outsiders while talking about such matters of adolescent interest as food, drinks, money, sex, and physical looks.

In a different perspective, Epoge (2013) studied the morphological and semantic innovations of Cameroon Pidgin English slang items across speech and shows their originality of form and meaning. He focused on the semantic fields, word formation processes, their meaning and social value. His findings revealed that slangs in Pidgin English involved coinage, compounding, semantic extension, semantic field, semantic and social value. The researcher concluded that slangs in Cameroon Pidgin English have vocabulary and phraseology from various sources such as the English language, indigenous languages of Cameroon and the French language. He contends that speakers tend to render their interactions incomprehensible through lexical innovations which disregard conventions, making Pidgin English creative and refreshing.

Telep (2019) in his turn described some of the recurrent stereotypic indexical values that a group of young Cameroonian immigrants in Paris assigned to *Francanglais*. It is a lexical register of French associated with informal and casual interactions, among young people, in urban settings of Cameroon. The researcher analysed their metapragmatic discourses about this register, which were collected through interviews. These discourses are imbued with recurrent ideologies of slang, whereby speech repertoires are evaluated as deviant with respect to one or more presupposed standards when brought under slang formulations. Therefore, she showed that, through the opposition they make between language and slang, and through the recurrent metaphor of the hood, which is associated with the social figure of the thug, speakers tended to depreciate *Francanglais* by categorising it as slang and thus by evaluating it as a sub-standard variety of the French language. They created symbolic boundaries between different and contrastive social types of speakers (young people vs. grown-up people, boys vs. girls, thugs vs. well-mannered people, rude

people vs. polite people, competent French speakers vs. incompetent French speakers), and they associated these personae with contrastive social spaces and values.

The current study shows how youths' innovative language constructs aim at positioning themselves.

2. Theoretical Framework

The method of analysis used for this study is following Eastman (1985) theoretical framework. The theory articulates that language use as an aspect of social identity is described in terms of (1) culturally specific vocabulary, (2) context-sensitive topics and (3) shared attitudes. As people become members of a social group and learn to share that group's identity, they acquire this 'group talk'. An understanding of group talk analysed on such a three-part model discoverable via participant observation may also be useful in leading towards an understanding of the process of social categorisation as it plays a role in intergroup communication.

3. Methodology

The data for this study are collected after a survey conducted on a total sum of 20 informants whose age ranges between 16 and 25 years old. The informants involved were youths whose fluency in Fulfulde is established. They had to provide a list of slangs they use in peer groups and their intentions. This study employed a qualitative research technique and a descriptive research design. Data were recorded and analysed following the Eastman (1985) paradigm.

4. Findings and Discussions

Youths' slangs in Fulfulde collected in the urban city of Ngaoundere yielded significant results. Three research questions were devised at the beginning of the investigation. Findings on the first research question based on social categorisation of slangs revealed that youth slangs in Fulfulde marked personality, physical traits, impairment, status and class, sex, body parts, crime and violence, drugs, religion, objects, place, age and gender.

4.1. Social Categorisation of Slangs

Table 1: Personality Descriptive Slang

Slang	Literal Meaning
Aburattawol	This fool
Agabalay	Disorderly person
Baddo	Lazy man
Biindi	non-vigilant person
Dackido	dirty person
Daiido	a cool person
Domdombal	liar
Gadjere	Short person
Géram malloum	A fool
Hakkilo fa'ando nano	A complicated person
Hore dumba waila	Forgetful person

Jungo juddi / Dumbi gassabalejum	Thief
Laaru lele do	Foolish person
Mâtéré/Hockumo maggi	Drunkard
Mbadawa / Djomboloy	A dull person
Mbalba / Gam mba	Stupid person
Mistrijo	wise person
Tchado	selfish
Wolira	Talkative person
Ngalbéré	Penniless
Matere	Tipsy

Table 1 above shows that youths, in their midst, utilize metaphorical terms to evaluate others, their personality traits in particular.

Table 2: Physical Traits Slang

Slang	Literal meaning
Gadjere	Short person
Goligolina	Tall person
Guenderou	Fat person
Touggere	Short boy
Sembe redu	Pregnant woman
Panga	Beautiful girl

Adjectives in Table 2 above showcase words which youths use to mark people whose physicality goes out of norms. When people are too short, too fat, pregnant or beautiful, they attribute them features to describe the intensity of the height, size, and the force of the belly concerning pregnant women or the colour of the skin. It is evidenced that these words touch the emotional sense of the hearer.

Table 3: Impairment Slang

Slang	Literal Meaning
Mahole yibbi	Toothless person

When youths mock at people who have lost some teeth, they call them *mahole yibbi*.

Table 4: Status and Class Slang

Slang	Literal Meaning
Aga	Rich person
Aoudou lappel	Poor shoe worn by villagers
Djiba sumpiiti / Habdowo	Poor person
Gambo	Any child born after twins
Sagal	Old car
Wantchowo	prostitute
Yamo’o boggol	Snake-eater
Djaki	Villager
Kilando	clandestine

The examples in Table 4 are expressions which describe people of different statuses and classes. Youths name rich people “aga”. They make a distinction between the poor and the rich regarding the person outlook and dressing. “Sagal” is also used to depict possessions. Debauched women are designated by the term “wantchowo” and people who perform exploit to eat snakes are qualified as “Yamo’o boggol”. A child who is born after twins is called “Gambo”. People from the village or behaving as villagers are deemed “djaki”. Those people who intrude on families at unseasonable hours or on the lands of another are called “kilando”.

Table 5: Sexual or Sensual Slangs and Body Parts

Slang	Literal Meaning
Feanam nguessa	date a girl for me
Tappugo laral/ Timinigo be mako / Zaanugo	to have sex with someone
Memumo jaaburu	to caress
Kako	girlfriend
Papata	penis
Rondu dongal ma	Mind your own business

The above slangs connote sexual and sensual concerns. They are considered among youths as taboo topics. Thus they resort to unusual words to express their thoughts.

Table 6: Crime and Violence Slang

Slangs	Literal Meaning
Gafiarou	A term used by thieves to indicate that they have encircled their target
Wo’oja hifnere copsi	used by thieves to give warnings to peers of the police’s coming.
Ndelgo’o	To steal
Fixsou mo	keep an eye on him
Wadmo djombe’e	bully him
Bodove	Let us beat the stranger

It is seen that criminals use slangs to apply violent force to people in the street or in the market. They equally use in-group words to escape the police’s grip or to commit crimes. Otherwise, youths may use odd words to ask peers to exercise violence on strangers.

Table 7: Drugs slang

Slang	Literal Meaning
Mode-mode	Indian hem
Maggi	Tramadol

The consumption and selling of drugs are prohibited by the law. Youths and criminals therefore use other words to refer to the issue when they want to buy them.

Table 8: Religion Slang

Slang	Literal Meaning
Kâdo / balejo	non-muslim
Gada mayo	Southern people

As shown by examples in Table 8, slangs are used by young adults to mark religious belonging and origin. Generally, according to the Fulfulde, people with non-muslim identities are viewed as “kâdo” or “balejo”. Otherwise, people who do not originate from the northern part of Cameroon are called “gada mayo”.

Table 9: Slang Connoting Drinks

Slang	Literal Meaning
Tametou	wine
Métandou	Beer

In the Muslim culture, consuming alcohol is seen as immoral; what you usually assume as a ‘haram’ practice. Youths living in a society where drinking alcohol is taboo use other referents to allude to the issue and to avoid others from getting what they are talking about.

Table 10: Slang Connoting Objects and Place

Slang	Literal Meaning
Tamre	ball
Gadal / Gongourou	carriage
Koungouna	money
Vakka dada	Bottle used by shepherds to keep water
Saare gouldoum	jail

Youths discuss objects using different names to allude to compressed air, car part, cash, gourd and jail deviating from the standard usage. They sound fresh in their parlance.

Table 11: Slang Connoting Age and Sex Difference

Slang	Literal Meaning
Bi laaral	A child
Pagna	Young girl
Laraal	Female adult
Ngafoure	Teen

Age and gender issues are discussed in funny terms invented by youths to indicate people from different age categories and sex.

4.2. Formation Processes

Results from the second research question indicate that slangs existing in Fulfulde culture use the standard rules of English language. After analyzing the extracted words or expressions, it is noticed that youth Fulfulde slangs are shaped

through coinages, affixation, compounding, borrowing, hyper synonymy, reduplication and semantic shift discussed in turn below.

4.2.1. Coinages

The words displayed in Table 12 below are arbitrarily fabricated signs or expressions which deviate from the standard Fulfulde youths come out with to suit their purpose. Their literal meaning has been presented earlier in the social categorization of collected slangs.

Table 12: Coinages

Slangs
Aburattawol
Aga
Agabalay
Aoudou lappel
Baddo
Biindi
Dackido
<i>Daiido</i>
Djaki
Djiba sumpiiti / Habdowo
Domdombal
Gada Mayo
Gadal / Gongourou
Gadjere
Gadjere
Gafiarou
Gambo
Goligolina
Guenderou
Kâdo / balejo
Kako
Kilando
Koungouna
Laraal
Maggi
Mâtéré
Mbadawa / Djomboloy
Mbalba
Métandou
<i>Mistrijo</i>
Ndelgo'o
Ngafoure
Pagna
Panga

Panga
Papata
Sagal
Sembe redu
Tametou
Tamre
Tchado
Touggere
Wantchowo
Wolira

4.2.2. *Affixation*

Another combination observed in the construction of slangs in Fulfulde slangs is affixation. Crystal (2008, p. 16) defines affixation as ‘the morphological process whereby grammatical or lexical information is added to a stem (‘prefixation’, ‘suffixation’, ‘infixation’). Prefixation is the main device used by the Fulfulde youths to build new words as portrayed in Table 13 that follows.

Table 13: Prefixation

Slangs	Fulfulde standard form
<i>Baarugo</i> (to go back)	Hotugo
<i>Boltugo</i> (to reveal a secret)	Wanguingo
<i>Chakchakugo</i> (to master)	Andugo
<i>Lootugo</i> (Scamming)	Jambugo
<i>Zaanugo</i> (to have sex)	Waatugo
<i>Dackido</i> (a dirty person)	Elnido
<i>Daiido</i> (a cool person)	Peodo
<i>Tchado</i> (selfish)	Tcholdo
<i>Mistrijo</i> (wise person)	Hikkmajo

The prefixes of standard forms were dropped and replaced by new ones as highlighted in italics in the slangs.

4.2.3. *Over-lexicalisation/Hypersynonymy*

Kirsten (2010, p.492) defined over-lexicalisation also called hypersynonymy as ‘the coining of a large number of terms for the same or similar concept.’ Youths in their imagination coined a great deal of lexical items in Fulfulde to refer to the same topic. Examples are displayed in Table 14 that follows.

Table 14: Overlexicalisation/hypersynonymy

Slangs	Overlexification/hypersynonymy
Sembere redu/oyaki mba’inandi	pregnant lady/ girl
Bingel debbo/pagna/zaane	young girl
Timinigo be mako/waatagu	have sex with someone
Gaddal/gongonrou	Carriage

Ngafoure / Jane	Teenager
Mbalba/ Djomboloy/ngambaa	stupid person
Mbadawa / gaadja	Dull person
Dackido/ñañare	Dirty person
Jungo juddi Dumbi gassabalejum	Thief

4.2.4. Compounding

Booij (2005, p.93) stated that ‘compounds are combinations of two or more lexeme’. Compound word is a new word that formed from two or more morphemes. Compounding processes of youth Fulfulde slangs obey the standard processes of word formation in English as shown by Table 15 below.

Table 15: Compounding

Slangs	Compounding
Sefene Dakker	Noun + Noun
Hockumo maggi	Adjective + noun
Memuno jaaburu	Particle + Verb
Vakka dada	Noun + Noun
Saare gouldum	Noun + Noun
Bi laaral	Noun + Noun
Gada Mayo	Noun + Noun
Gam mba	Adjective + Noun
Sookka hore	Adjective + Noun

4.2.5. Borrowing

“Borrowing” has been defined by Hock & Joseph (2009, p.241) as: ‘an adoption of individual words or even large sets of vocabulary items from another language or dialect’. Some slangs in Fulfulde take their origin from local languages like *Gadja* which means a dull person; from Kanuri (Nigeria) like *Kunguna* which stands for money and Arabic as *mouchkila* which means to worry.

4.2.6. Reduplication

According to Dawson & Phelan (2016, p.274), reduplication is ‘a process of forming new words by doubling either an entire free morpheme (total reduplication) or part of it (partial reduplication)’. Phonological manipulations or duplicates of the same root are combined by youths to form new Fulfulde concepts as indicated below:
Mode-mode: hem

Tara Tara: Let’s go for hunting

4.2.7. Semantic Shift

According to John Platt, Heidi Weber and Mian Lo, a semantic shift is ‘a change in the meaning of a word’ (*The New Englishes*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul,

1984, p. 101). They also posit that when the context changes, this ‘word may add a new meaning’ (, 1984, p. 101) Examples of Fulfulde slangs that follow are standard words to which a new meaning has been assigned to different semantic roles.

Table 16: Semantic Shift

Slangs	Fulfulde Standard Meaning	Semantic Shift
Dumbi gassabalejum	Black mouse	Thief
Mbalba	Sheep	Stupid person
Domdombal	Chameleon	Liar
Mahole yibbi	The wall has collapsed.	Toothless person
Djiba sumpiiti	The packet is torn	A person who does not have money.

5. Social Identity in Youth Fulfulde Slangs

Findings on the third research question dealing with social identities embodied in Fulfulde yielded various functions. Youths in their group membership coin new words or expressions to reduce their fellows; to establish social and gender differences among members of the community; to exclude others or to sound snobbish.

5.1. Offending and Shocking Others

A great deal of referents in Fulfulde are deliberately used to offend or reduce individuals, to mock at their status and impairment. As illustrations, the words *dackido* (dirty person); *baddo* (lazy man); *gam mba* (stupid man); *djomboloy* (dull man); *mbalba* (stupid person); *aburattawol* (this fool); *géram malloum* (a fool); *domdombal* (liar); *wolira* (talkative person); *biindi* (non-vigilant person); *agabalay* (disorderly person) *hakkilo fa’ando nano* (complicated person); *hore dumba waila* (forgetful person); *mâtéré* (drunkard); *wantchow* (prostitute); *jungo juddi / dumbi gassabalejum* (thief); *sembe redu* (pregnant woman); *guenderou* (fat person); *tougger* (short boy); *mahole yibbi* (toothless person) are epithets used to describe people’s shortcomings. The addressees referred to are tagged as lazy; dirty; intellectually low; noisy; careless; disorderly; dishonest; complicated; ethylic; oblivious; debauched; outlawed; pregnant (to describe the force of the belly); or physically impaired. Addressers in this context see others as negative set of people who behave differently from them.

5.2. Social Class and Distance

Different etiquettes are used by youths to elevate or discriminate people’s characteristics and dressing. For example, youths use the term *aga* to name rich people; *djaki* for a villager; *yamo’o boggol* to represent a snake-eater; *aoudou lapel* to designate a type of shoe worn by villagers; *sefene dakker* to refer to a type of cap worn by poor people and *gambo* to type any child born after twins. These words establish scale differences among people: some are seen as superior to others by wealth and by birth.

5.3. Sex difference

Sex difference is equally achieved in the word *laaral* used to designate a female adult.

5.4. Age Factor

The age factor is perceived in these selected sets of words. The set *pagna/zaane/bingel debbo* is used to designate a young girl. Alternatively, *ngafoure* and *jane* are used for teenagers; *bi laaral* for a child.

5.5. Dissimulation and Exclusion

Youth slangs in Fulfulde are used by gangs or criminals to conceal secrets from people. They also serve to get safe, to keep away from law enforcement; to discuss taboo issues in the community. For instance, criminals use the words *biyaki* (this person) to refer to their target; *lootugo* for scamming; *wo'oja hifnere copsi* to warn their peers of the police intrudance; *gafiarou* to indicate that thieves have surrounded their target; *mode-mode* for Indian hem and *maggi* to mean tramadol.

Special vocabulary items are also used to name taboo issues in the community. Specifically, *papata* is meant for penis; *timinigo be mako / tappugo laral* meaning to have sex with someone; *feanam nguessa* for "date a girl for me"; *tametou* is used for wine and *métandou* for beer; *memumo jaaburu* for "to caress".

Another function achieved by Fulfulde slangs is exclusion. In that regard, the expression *Wadmo djombe'e* is used by cynical youths to ask their partners to bully an individual. In the same context, they slip out the phrase *fixsou mo* to ask an abetting companion to keep an eye on a target. Muslim youths employ specific terms to indicate people who do not share their religious beliefs or originate from their geographical region. The terms *kâdo* and *balejo* are used for non-Muslims; *gada mayo* for people from the South. In short, youths attitudes through their linguistic behaviour demonstrate that they separate and discriminate.

5.6. Snobbishness

In search of originality and inventiveness new words are worked in Fulfulde to name people and things. For example, group of youths use the word *sagal* for an old car; *vakka dada* to mean a shepherds' gourd; *koungouna* to represent money; *gadal* and *gongourou* to identify carriage; *gogolina* to deal with a tall person and *kilando* to type a clandestine and *tamre* to indicate a ball.

Conclusion

This study dealt with the use of youth Fulfulde slang features in the Adamawa highlands of Cameroon and described the social identities constructed in the choices effected. A corpus of 70 slangs was gathered through a semi-structured method among youths and the analysis followed Eastman (1985) theoretical paradigm. Conclusions emerging from the discussed findings are that youths used slangs in Fulfulde to represent individuals' traits; status and class; age; gender; sexuality; body parts; criminality; drugs; religion, origin; drinks, objects, things and place. The neologised

words derived from coinages, affixation, compounding, borrowing, overlexicalisation or hypersynonymy and semantic shifts. Observation showed that such words deviate from standard forms of Fulfulde and aimed at constructing social differences or to sound original. All in all, Fulfulde slangs of the Adamawa region cannot be considered as fixed as they vary from one circle of speakers to another. They have become part of everyday practice. Obviously, the list of Fulfulde slangs distribution discussed in this study is not exhaustive and deserves to be extended in further studies.

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