

Language contact, pidginization and language creation: the case of Camfranglais of Cameroon

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This paper explores the phenomenon of language creation through language contact in Africa. It reaffirms the fact that when languages come into contact and coexist in the same community for a particular length of period, they end up influencing each other in various ways and at various levels. This influence which can either be in the form of borrowing, adaptation, code-switching or pidginization, can subsequently lead to the creation of new languages. Focusing on the Camfranglais example, the paper posits that the coexistence of the multiple languages of Cameroon, especially in the urban cities, has given birth to this pidgin which is undergoing a significantly speedy development and given the favorable environment it enjoys, it is likely to become a distinct language in a not very distant future. This outcome would add to the already rich diversity of languages in the country, and its neutrality may also provide a solution to the endless issue of regional and linguistic conflict in Cameroon. The paper traces the origin of the language as a slang from the late seventies and early eighties to its present form with a distinct structure, while examining the role it can play in the midst of the many languages of Cameroon.