

PART 2

Questioning Language Contact as 'Phenomenon'



Contact and Ethnicity in “Youth Language”

Description: In Search of Specificity

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1 Introduction

Contemporary western urban environments are often associated in sociolinguistics with heteroglossic linguistic practices, considered to be particularly salient among young speakers and therefore called “youth languages”. These practices are viewed as an effect of migration which led to contact phenomena between the dominant language and different migration languages. These migratory movements have increased recently in Western¹ metropolises and big cities, one of the effects of globalization that has been dubbed “superdiversity” (Blommaert 2010; Bommaert and Rampton, 2011).

However, it can be wondered how far these transnational migrations give birth to radically “new” linguistic varieties, with specific features. Can these heteroglossic urban linguistic practices lead to the emergence of something original? Will they produce “mixing” of languages, as is often said in public discourse and sometimes in academic work?

Since language contacts in urban settings are far from a recent phenomenon (see e.g. Lodge, 2004 on the historical making of Paris), it is worth asking what may make “youth languages” remarkable not only for linguists but also in the eyes of the media and lay persons who seem to be quite concerned by these ways of speaking.

To answer these questions, this chapter will first review the labels that attempt to circumscribe these language practices and their specific features. While we will follow Rampton (2011) in using the term “contemporary urban vernaculars”² (hereafter CUV), we will question the current proliferation of terminology: are new categories and new conceptual tools really needed to

1 Migration and diaspora phenomena are of course not specific to Western countries, but this chapter will mostly concentrate on Western Europe.

2 We would prefer not to name these language practices (due in particular to the risk of essentializing them), but we feel it is impossible to totally avoid a cover term (if not a categorisation). We thus adopt as a lesser evil Rampton’s underspecified expression *Contemporary*

capture what is at stake? What is the interest of these terminological innovations, beyond the kudos they bring their authors within the academic world? We will argue that in most of the literature the labels and the features they are claimed to capture fail in pointing out what makes these linguistic contact practices different from other forms of variation and contact (sections 1 and 2).

We will then consider urban language practices in terms of language contact, so as to question the relevance of such an approach. Section 3 first looks at the linguistic features considered to characterize French CUV in France and in Belgium, questioning the role that contact plays in their alleged novelty. We then examine the way many contact explanations of linguistic variation and change view the process governing the outcome of contact. This leads us to criticize the fact that the social conditions of contact phenomena are sometimes neglected in sociolinguistic studies.

This is why, in section 4, we try to clarify the social contexts in which contacts between French and migration languages take place. Finally, in section 5, we propose a hypothesis aiming at explaining some regularities in French CUV—in particular in the types of forms borrowed from migration languages—relating them to the social conditions and interactions of their speakers. As contact is oriented by the roles that borrowed forms play in the borrowing language, we need to understand, beyond the frequent lexicographic activity of listing words, the social conditions in which some features are borrowed while others are not. While it is obvious that these practices have to do with contact, it is unclear how far defining them in a language contact framework is insightful, and if it would not be better to keep the notion of contact within limits to understand related but distinct cases of hybridity.

2 Usual CUV Labeling

2.1 *Giving Names to Ways of Speaking*

The very act of giving names to ways of speaking is a temptation which presupposes that varieties do exist beyond the analyst's toolkit. The attempt to specify what makes them particular has a double effect on their conceptualization: first it tends to underline some discontinuity in the space of language variation through the identification of a set of co-occurring features; second, it associates a way of speaking with a particular sub-group in a community, often defined by a single characteristic. Chambers and Trudgill (1998), for instance,

Urban Vernacular, which implies a new reflection on *vernacular* (as suggested by Rampton, 2011: 291).

define a dialect as “a variety of language which differs grammatically, phonologically and lexically from other varieties, and which is associated with a particular geographical area and/or with a particular social class or status group”. Naming a variety has thus a reifying and homogenizing effect (see Tabouret-Keller, 1997 on naming languages, a process which also concerns the naming of varieties and styles): it suggests that some group of individuals shares a way of speaking³ that is different enough from other groups’ ways to be identified as distinctive.

Yet, this distinctiveness is not always perceived as such by the speakers, as generally, speakers don’t give names to their ways of speaking. For example in answering an awkward question from an awkward inquirer (“how do you call the way you talk?”) during our fieldwork (see details below), a frequent answer was simply *on parle normal* ‘we talk normally’. This does not mean that people are not conscious of their speech styles being different from other groups or from the school language, but they regard them as unmarked in their environment and as different from a not always clearly-identified “outside”. For instance, Youssef, a student from Liège, says: *on parle notre français à nous / on parle pas comme dans le centre-ville / on dit pas Monsieur Madame tout ça* [we speak our own French / we don’t talk like in the town centre / we don’t say Mister, Madam and all that stuff—Interview by P. Hambye], while Hatim, from the same school, says: *on parle pas un français très très français (...) on va parler comme les gens de la rue avec un argot de rue* [we don’t speak a very very French French [...] we talk like people of the street with a street slang—Collective interview of Hatim and three other students by P. Hambye]. While this highlights awareness of linguistic variation and of its relation with social boundaries, it does not point to the distinctiveness assumed to be associated with a language variety, as the features underlined by our speakers may simply be regarded as falling within particular registers.⁴

3 It suggests, in a rather essentialist view of group membership and identity, that some features or some ways of speaking “belong to” groups and that members are bearers of the group’s variety, a view which neglects the fact that all speakers build their way of speaking from others (imitation, mirroring, fashion...).

4 The two projects we are referring to in this chapter are, on the French side, ANR FR-09-FRBR_037-01, *Multicultural London English—Multicultural Paris French*, which aimed at comparing the possible effects of contact with migrant languages in Paris French and in London English; here only the French corpus is considered, which we refer to as MPF (see Gadet and Guerin, 2012; Gadet, 2013). On the Belgian side, the data come from a one-year ethnographic survey in the city of Liège, funded by the F.R.S.-FNRS (see Hambye, 2009; Hambye and Siroux, 2008). The young people interviewed for MPF are referred to by pseudonyms close to their given names, followed by the name of the investigator and the number of the

2.2 Different Types of Labels

The same kind of somewhat vague labeling can be found in several studies on CUV: the expression *language of X* points out the use of a specific *code* and relates it to a particular group designated as typical.

Rather than the 4-level classification by Androutsopoulos on German (2010), we will classify labels from several European situations in three different categories, the first two comprising subcategories.

The first category is directly or indirectly ethnic. Some labels rely on an ethno-national category: *Türkendeutsch*, *Balkandeutsch*, *Türkenslang* (Auer, 2003, 2013), introducing an idea of mixing. Also ethnic, but in a derogatory way notably through stereotyped cultural attributes: *Kanakspråk* in Germany (Auer, 2003; Deppermann, 2007—*Kanacke* being in German a name for “people who look like foreigners of southern origin”—see a terminological discussion in Auer, 2013); *Kebab-Norsk* (Svendsen and Røyneland, 2008), or *Kebab-Swedish* (Kotsinas, 1998; also *Spagghesvenska*); *Perkersprog* (*perker* being in Danish a stigmatizing way of calling migrants—Quist, 2008), *Wallahsprog* for the broken Danish of first generation migrants (Quist, 2008—*wallah* is an Arabic word meaning “I swear”); *Lan-Sprache* in German (Androutsopoulos, 2010, *lan* is a Turkish word for “guy”).

The second group of labels refers to a spatialisation of urban territories. It can be abstract like “the neighborhood”, as in *Kiezdeutsch* (in Berlin German, “language of the neighborhood”, Wiese, Freywald and Mayr, 2009), *langue du quartier* or *des banlieues* in French; *förortsvenska* in Stockholm (‘suburb Swedish’, Kotsinas, 1998). Other labels of this group refer more precisely to the kind of housing: *langue* (or *français*) *des cités*, *des ghettos*; very seldom the specific name of a geographic place (*Rinkebyspråk*—from the name of a suburban place near Stockholm where this way of speaking was first identified—Kotsinas, 1998; Stroud, 2004; Bijvoet and Fraurud, 2012). The reference to the *street* seems in between, and is probably operative in all languages (in continuity with the expression *street culture*): *straattaal*, *Sprache der Strasse*, *langue de la rue* (Appel, 1999; Nortier and Dorleijn, 2008; Tissot, Schmid and Galliker, 2011; Lepoutre, 1997), and seems also to be asserted by members (see *langue de la street* in the mouth of Halima, a girl from Cergy Saint-Christophe in the MPF corpus—Joanne3b).

inquiry. For the Belgium extracts, we give information about the setting of the interaction where the extract comes from. We have no room here to give more information on the two projects, and the reader is referred to the methodology sections of the cited articles.

A third (quite limited) group is based on the demographic category *young*: *youth language*, *Jugendsprache*, *langue des jeunes*, *parlers jeune* (see Auzanneau and Juillard, 2012 for a discussion of this categorisation).

In the last two types (spatial and demographic), we find no apparent mention of ethnic characteristics, but it can be wondered whether place or age function as kinds of “euphemistic categories” (Rea and Tripier, 2008) for ethnicity (Fought, 2006) or social class (Hambye, 2008), a point we return to in section 2.

2.3 *The Ambiguities of Labeling: Self vs Other Labeling*

What do these labels tell about the distinctiveness of CUV compared to other urban vernaculars? Their meaning can be somewhat vague as it is often unclear (and not always easy to document) how far these denominations were first enunciated by the youth themselves (in a first person enunciation) or whether they are products of a third person process, from academic experts or from folklinguistic comments in the media and public discourse. *Kebab-Norsk* for instance is said by Svendsen and Røyneland (2008) to be a media term, while *Kebab-Swedish* or *Kiezdeutsch* come from the users themselves,⁵ according to Kotsinas (1998) and Wiese (2013a and b) and were subsequently picked up by the media. Some of the labels were clearly coined by researchers (*youth language*, *Moroccan flavored Dutch*—Nortier, 2008). The fact that some of these terms are reclaimed by youth is proven in French by their linguistic re-appropriations: *cité* can become *téci* (verlanisation) and *tess* (apocope); *quartier*, *tiéquar* (verlanisation) or *tiek* (verlanisation + apocope)—terms largely used in rap songs, and thus widespread in the whole Francophone world.

This question of labeling is often addressed in the sociological literature, especially in ethnomethodology (see Sacks, 1979 on group categorization). This is why the erasing of the source of a term is a real problem, as there is a difference between using a term for oneself and being designated by others as such. An anecdote will show the pragmatic effects of the enunciator. In October 2005, former French Home Secretary Nicolas Sarkozy, who was to become Président de la République, publicly used the word *racaille* [‘scum’]

5 This could be an example of the well-known process of reclaim and recuperation of a derogatory designation into a claimed identity, active for example when an association in Nanterre (near Paris) calls itself *Zy’va*, from a derogatory denomination of suburban youth: “les z’y va” (verlanized form of *vas-y*, “go on”).

to speak of youth.⁶ The reactions showed that those who can call themselves and their group *racaille* take it as an insult in the mouth of outgroup people. In other words, the social meaning of a label depends on its enunciator as well as on the enunciative situation.

The relation between the variety and the group associated to it is another source of ambiguity, ~~concerning the relation between a way of speaking and a population~~. Do expressions such as *language of (group) X* mean that the variety is spoken by one specific group (and by everyone within the group)? Or do they imply, more broadly, affiliation to the group? The second answer is generally the right one: many features of *Türkendeutsch* or of *la langue des cités* for instance are used beyond the Turkish community in Germany and the urban suburbs in France. It has also been shown that, even if most of its speakers are young, these forms are not restricted to young people (see Rampton, 2011; Auzanneau and Juillard, 2012 among others). Obviously, all youngsters do not draw upon and identify with *youth language*—or use it more or less (or at least some of its features), according to the situation.

Nevertheless, the social meanings conveyed by features of a given variety *may* be based on the indexical relation between these features and the speakers seen as their prototypical users. It is this indexical relation with a socially salient group that labelings try to summarize, in what Irvine and Gal (2000) called an “iconization process”.⁷

3 (Multi)ethnolects: A Misleading Category?

3.1 *Varieties and Their “Prototypical” Users: A Focus on Ethnicity*

From the labels listed above, it can be seen that a frequent way to describe CUV refers to ethnicity (even in euphemistic ways) and points towards the idea that speakers of CUV thus express a subjective affiliation with (rather than objective membership of) an ethnic group. This view leads to qualifying these practices as *ethnolects*. In addition, this relates ethnolects to the purported L1 and cultural background of the ethnic groups who use them and to the specific contact phenomena triggered by population movements.

6 In Argenteuil (north of Paris), he addressed a bystander with the words: *Vous en avez assez de cette bande de racailles? Eh bien, on va vous en débarrasser* [Have you had enough of this scum? Well then, we'll get rid of them for you].

7 See Stroud (2004) for an analysis of *Rinkeby Swedish* in terms of iconization.

This term *ethnolect* is considered problematic by a number of authors, who nevertheless adopt it as a cover term: among many others, Auer⁸ (2003, 2013) or Androutsopoulos (2010) on German, or Schmid (2011), Tissot, Schmid and Galliker (2011) on Zurich Schwytzertütsch . . . It thus remains a frequent locus of discussion and of ideological debate, but often ambiguous as in a 2008 issue of the *International Journal of Bilingualism*: “Ethnolects? The emergence of new varieties among adolescents”—Nortier (2008). There appears to be a discrepancy in the title between the interrogative first part, and the apparent assertion of the second, but it is fair to say that several papers in this issue engage in particularly rich discussions, like Jaspers’ or Eckert’s who both insist on the risk of losing sight of the constructed nature of the term *ethnolect*.

This label is then openly questioned (Stroud, 2004, among others) and certainly has to be further analyzed and criticized. First, because it “presupposes a fixed set of more or less stable or static linguistic norms” (Nortier, 2008: 4)—a problem shared by all denominations such as *varieties*, *styles* or all the types of *-lects*, which tend to represent language as a fixed rather than as a fluid entity. But also because “ethnolects are not restricted to specific ethnic groups” (*idem*) but are more largely shared: “speakers of so-called ethnolects do not live or speak in isolation” (Eckert, 2008: 26). The topic and its consequences are certainly worthy of further discussion.

3.2 *Multiplicity as a Way Out?*

It is precisely to capture the fact that these varieties cross over ethnic boundaries that researchers have coined terms such as “parler véhiculaire interethnique” (Billiez, 1992), “Multicultural London English” (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox and Torgersen, 2011), “multiethnischer Dialekt des Deutschen” (Wiese, 2013a), and the more general category of *multiethnolect*,⁹ also adopted by several researchers.

The term *multiethnolect* was first coined in a short programmatic paper by Clyne (2000) regularly quoted as the founding source. Clyne’s objectives were

8 An explicit definition by Auer (2003): “Ein Ethnolekt ist eine Sprechweise (Stil), die von den Sprechern selbst und/oder von anderen mit einer oder mehreren nicht-deutschen ethnischen Gruppen assoziiert wird” [An ethnolect is a way of speaking (a style) which will be associated with one or several non-German ethnic groups, by speakers themselves and/or by others]. Auer’s paper is among the first on this subject, and is often quoted.

9 It is fruitful to note the spread of the prefix *multi-* in compositions to do with migration in Western societies. According to the sociologist Doytcheva (2011), the term *multiculturalism*, which is not unrelated to “multiethnolect” in its ordinary meaning (not in the political one), appeared late in the 20th century (in the fifties), in countries hosting the proportionally highest rates of migrants: Canada and Australia.

to categorize *lingua francas* vs *ethnolects* (those comprising *ethnolects* and *multiethnolects*) with respect to their linguistic features. The success of this denomination largely came from its use to deal with so-called “youth languages” in multicultural settings.

Though frequent, the label “*multiethnolect*” is not without its problems, as it shares with “*ethnolect*” several questionable assumptions, the main difference being that it is not based on one single ethnic source.

First, the relevance of the category “ethnicity” is problematic in countries where people frequently have mixed roots, which is the case in most if not all Western European countries. It is also unclear why people of Moroccan or Algerian descent should be taken as a single ethnic group, as is sometimes the case in the literature on French CUV, since they can have different linguistic origins (at least Arabic or Amazigh).

Then, if an ethnic group is defined through its (national) culture, it can of course be assumed that people with a Maghrebian background do share cultural features, but it does not follow that *because of* these shared roots, they have similar ways of clothing, speaking, living, similar values or beliefs. In other words, even if they really share a culture, this does not necessarily mean that their ethno-cultural background is the driving factor of this common culture. Shared ethno-cultural roots are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for sharing a culture, and it is impossible to affirm that the linguistic practices of social groups with foreign ethno-cultural roots are *due to* this common ethno-cultural background. As Jaspers (2008: 85) put it: “*ethnolect*’ as an analytical concept buttresses the idea that linguistic practices are *caused* by ethnicity”.

Third, as pointed out above, labeling a way of speaking as an *ethnolect* is based on the idea that the language practices under scrutiny index an affiliation with an ethnically-defined group, an assumption that can be questioned. Since many authors (Auer, 2003; Jamin and Trimaille, 2008; Nortier and Doorleijn, 2008; Quist, 2008 to name but a few) have observed that so-called *ethnolects* do not primarily index an affiliation with a given ethnic group, these seem to have lost the direct association with ethnicity.

In summary, the notion of (*multi*)*ethnolect* assumes that urban heteroglossic language practices are produced by and index ethnicity. Even if the prefix *multi-* smoothens the one-to-one relationship between ways of speaking and ethnicity, it remains based on questionable assumptions. That is why we adopt CUV as a cover term (see footnote 1), shown by Rampton (2011) to be more relevant than any other for at least 3 reasons: 1) *vernacular* rather than *-lect* (indexing non standard); 2) *vernacular* with the idea of durability of the

phenomenon beyond a young age; 3) nowadays, “multiethnic” can be held to be implied by *urban* (2011: 290).

4 Heteroglossic Language Practices Seen as an Outcome of Contact-Induced Change

The heteroglossic nature of CUV makes these ways of speaking differ from traditional urban sociolects such as Parisian *français populaire*. Many authors link the emergence of CUV to a diversification in (sub)urban areas in large Western cities—and probably further. While cities are (and have always been) a prominent locus of language contacts (Manessy, 1992; Calvet, 1994; Trudgill, 2002; Lodge, 2004), it still has to be established whether migrations in a globalized world have really increased multilingualism (see Mufwene, 2001). Although the *radical* heterogeneity of at least part of the linguistic material circulating in urban contexts may be rather new to some Western countries where the presence of migrant populations is relatively recent (as in Sweden, Norway or Denmark, and even in Germany), heteroglossic urban dialects cannot be viewed as a totally “new” phenomenon: heterogeneity and instability is to be found everywhere, even in so-called monolingual societies—if such entities do exist.

However, compared to older urban vernaculars, what could be new in CUV is the degree of linguistic heterogeneity, with elements which can be viewed as transferred¹⁰ from immigrant languages. Contact-induced change is thus obviously at play here. Yet, in order to understand the specific dynamics of CUV, we have to study the kinds of contact processes that favor their emergence as well as how these processes have constrained the types of transfers observed.

Two main processes leading to contact induced-changes may be at work here: (a) interference—*substratum interference*, *shift-induced interference* (Thomason, 2001), *imposition* (Winford, 2005)—due to imperfect learning of a target language by speakers who tend to retain in the language they are acquiring patterns, forms or semiotic routines from their former practices; and (b) borrowing, where the speakers of a recipient language “borrow” from a language/variety they are in contact with. According to Thomason (2001: 66–76),

¹⁰ We make here a loose use of terms referring to the effects of contact, such as *borrowing* or *transfer*. For a discussion of their inadequacy and the reasons why he prefers *replicability* (which is not easy in ordinary use, the reason why he and most authors keep using ordinary terms), see Matras (2009, chapter 6).

shift-induced interference leads principally to phonological and syntactic changes, whereas borrowing implies first and foremost lexical transfer.

4.1 *The Case of French CUV*

Does this dichotomy help to account for the characteristics of CUV? To answer such a question, we now turn to observations that several authors, including ourselves, have made from fieldwork on French. A survey of the linguistic descriptions of CUV in Belgium and in France shows that the following features are often deemed typical of these ways of speaking. We only list here features mentioned by more than one author among the following: Conein (1998), Gadet (1998), Armstrong and Jamin (2002), Billiez and Krief (2003), Lambert (2003), Jamin, Trimaille and Gasquet-Cyrus (2006), Lehka-Lemarchand (2007), Jamin and Trimaille (2008), Audrit (2009), Hambye (2009), Fagyal (2010), Armstrong and Pooley (2010), Gadet and Guerin (2012), Paternostro (2014). We illustrate the features with examples taken from our own data (if unspecified, this means that they are found in both corpora):



Phonology/Prosody:

- Non standard glottalized realization of /r/;
- Palatalization and affrication of dental and velar plosives;
- Posteriorization of /a/;
- Specific intonative pattern on the penultimate and final syllables of prosodic units.

Lexicon:

- Slang words, insults, swear words (some modeled on Arabic: *fiis de chien, nique ta mere, sur la vie de ma mère*);¹¹
- Lexical borrowings, mainly nouns from Arabic (*seum, dawa, hass*—MPF, *shmet*—Liège), English from hip hop and rap culture and, depending on the cities, other languages like Romani (*narvalo, michto, racli*—MPF) as well as terms of unidentified origin (*crari*);
- Verlan (especially in some cities, above all Paris—even if this feature is less dynamic than before);
- Traditional Argot.

¹¹ The examples in this section are not translated as they are mere illustrations of phenomena. We hope it is clear that this chapter is not intended as a case-study (or a comparison between two cases) but rather as a theoretical reflection.

Grammar and discourse:

- Verb invariability *on lui donne à graille, me faire perquise*; alleged or real Romani verbs (*bédave, poucave, tu vas bicrave ta casquette à qui?*) as well as verlanized forms (*j’ai pécho, kène, tèje-moi ça là*);
- Omission of words (clitics, or *que*, not to speak of *ne*): *ça fait longtemps j’en fais*;
- Indirect interrogatives built on the model of direct questions: *j’ai pas compris qu’est-ce qu’il a fait*;
- Absence of the subjunctive: *j’ai peur que c’est dégueulasse quoi*;
- Masculine gender agreement: *après tu as les meufs elles commencent à danser tous*;
- Parataxis in argumentation: *j’ai pas envie de me faire perquise les flics ils me sortent de chez moi je suis en caleçon*;
- Possibly innovative features: *même pas* (*les filles qui disent je m’en bats les couilles chaque fois je les reprends même pas une meuf elle dit ça*); *genre* (*après genre tu as une réputation tout le monde sait que tu es tu es une radine*); the adjective *grave* in an adverbial use (*ça les a grave aidées au niveau de l’anglais*), *obligé* (*pas obligé y a des balances*)...

4.2 The Role of Contact in CUV Specificity

Among these features, it still remains to be better established on the basis of more descriptions of all urban vernaculars which can be categorized as: a) traditional nonstandard features shared with other vernaculars of French; b) simplified features due to orality; c) probably borrowed features; d) possibly borrowed features; e) possibly converging features.

If we consider the role that contact may have played in the spread of these features, in a model of contact as briefly sketched above, it could be said that the phonological and grammatical nonstandard features of CUV first gained frequency as the result of a leveling process through imperfect learning in the French of lower-class immigrant speakers (see Matras, 2009), and that they then spread among larger groups in lower-class multicultural neighborhoods. The relative specificity of CUV compared to traditional vernaculars may then be related to acquisition of the dominant language in multicultural areas. Speakers of different languages shift to the community’s majority language, taking as targets not so much native speakers of the majority language, who may be in a minority, but other second-language speakers, thus increasing the possible role of so-called “imperfect” learning and shift-induced interference. If the shifting group is integrated into the majority-language speech community, native speakers of the majority language can import features of the shifting

group's variety into their own ways of speaking through accommodation¹² (Thomason, 2001: 75).

For the same reasons, forms of immigrant languages may have been borrowed from the French of urban lower-class youth (including “monolingual” French speakers), either through direct contact among bilinguals or through contact with the target language of migrant speakers.

This would also account for the fact that lexical transfers from migrant languages are more frequent and spread more easily than phonological or grammatical ones, since they can be the result of borrowing in a context of “casual contact” where borrowers need not be fluent in the source language (Thomason, 2001: 70, and Section 5 of this chapter). Phonological, grammatical and discursive features of migrant learners may well be borrowed by the majority group, but this mainly occurs in cases of intense contact. In the same vein, the fact that the contact occurs between low-prestige minority languages and a single dominant language may help understand why the degree of linguistic heterogeneity in European CUV is far lower than in hybrid codes in situations of societal multilingualism, as for *Chiac* in Canada (Perrot, 2005), *Camfranglais*/*Francanglais* in Cameroon (Féral, 2012), or *Nouchi* in Ivory Coast—to mention only French-based hybrid languages (see Kiessling and Mous, 2006 on African hybrid languages in general, among which French-based ones).

4.3 *Limits of a Contact Approach to CUV*

An approach to CUV as a language contact phenomenon, although obviously insightful, raises some difficulties. When phonological or grammatical features are assumed to be transferred without lexical transfer, it can be wondered whether changes are due to contact, to internally-motivated drifts, or to cross-linguistic communicative or cognitive trends (see Poplack and Levey, 2010 for a discussion on contact-induced phenomena vs internal linguistic dynamics). Multiple causation can be considered, especially since the structural changes supposedly due to contact are most of the time based on forms and patterns already existing in the recipient language (Chamoreau, 2012), possibly with reorganization. For instance, the constricted realization of /r/ could have an Arabic connotation (“coloration arabe”, Billiez, 1992: 120) and the affrication of dental plosives may appear as Arabic sounding (Jamin, Trimaille and Gasquet-Cyrus, 2006: 351). But it is not sufficient to state that these features are in fact

¹² The usual home language of migrant families is most of the time other than French. It can also be different kinds of non-hexagonal French, most of the time L2, especially for the numerous families from former African colonies north or black Africa, who arrived in Belgium and France with some competence in French. (Gadet, 2013).

transferred from Arabic. They may equally well be the outcome of internal pressures: for affrication, Armstrong and Jamin (2002: 132) point out that it is “a feature that has been associated with the Paris vernacular for several centuries as well as being a well-attested historical phenomenon”. In other words, contact with migrant languages and L2 learning of French may have favored affrication, but they are not necessarily the source of the phenomenon. In the same vein, Wiese (2013b) shows that emergent grammatical phenomena in Kiezdeutsch constitute a system, some pieces of which are not unknown of some diatopic varieties of German, at least for the grammatical phenomena she works on. She thus concludes that Kiezdeutsch is definitely German: “Kiezdeutsch characteristics point to a solid integration into German and to a dominance of language-internal motivations, rather than contact-induced effects” (211).

A second problem is linked to the identification of the factors that may explain why some contact forms are borrowed and then spread, while others are not. In this line, research on contact-induced changes has long investigated “relations between structure-oriented borrowability hierarchies and social and communicative motivations for language mixing.” (Matras, 1998: 282). In several studies on CUV, the tendency is (more or less implicitly) to focus primarily on rather readily-observable objective characteristics (e.g. demographic weight of the communities, internal structure of the languages in contact...), i.e. on factors having more to do with socio-demographic or internal properties of the languages and groups in contact than with the whole ecological situation in which the contact occurs. In this approach, the explanation for the features of CUV is sought in the speakers’ heritage languages; this seems to be the case, among many others, of Fagyal (2010) when she studies a prosodic pattern said to be typical of *français des banlieues*, or of Caubet (2007), concerning the emphasisation of vowels and consonants as well as calques in the lexicon.

While such analyses may be relevant in situations of intense contact where transfers are overwhelmingly present and may thus be largely independent from socially-motivated factors, it seems more problematic in the contexts where CUV are observed in France and in Belgium, where contact is not intense, first because the number of bilingual speakers is not that high¹³ and

13 It seems difficult to generalize about the number of bilinguals, as bilingualism depends on the language(s) spoken, the ethnic background, the date of arrival of the family, as well as the eagerness for integration (or on the contrary for returning to the country of origin)... See Leconte (2011) for the differences between several African communities in the Rouen area in France, depending on the symbolic and identity values attributed to a language. For example, there is a difference between speakers of Pulaar, a positively

then because of the functional distribution of languages, as immigrant languages are not used in all functions. In this sense, the *français des banlieues* of current third generation youth (assuming that it is suitable to call them “migrants” or “from migrant descent”, as most of them are in fact French or Belgian born and were socialized in French) is quite different from the foreigner talk of their grand-parents, which was more readily analyzable as the outcome of processes of interference.

Given the number of languages involved, direct transfer from an immigrant language to the dominant language is unlikely. This is why taking up Mufwene’s (2001) approach, Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox and Torgersen (2011: 176–177) view the contact situation in inner-city London as “producing a ‘feature pool’ from the range of input varieties, with speakers selecting different combinations of features from the pool”.¹⁴ Yet, when trying to explain why some features transfer to the common usage in *Multicultural London English* while others do not, they turn exclusively to linguistic factors and following Siegel (1997), they consider that the factors at stake in the selection are frequency, regularity, transparency and salience, which makes of them cross-linguistic structural factors. Without neglecting the role of linguistic factors, it can be considered following Thomason (2001: 77) that these are less important than social factors and “less important than the influence of speakers’ attitudes”, as they “can be overridden by social factors pushing in an opposite direction”. And this is probably all the more true in low-intensity contacts such as in Europe.

Consequently, in the remainder of this chapter, we examine the role that attitudes and identification processes may play in the replication of migrant languages’ features in vernacular French. We then consider another potential factor at play with the hypothesis that the features emerging from the contact situation may be pragmatically or interactionally motivated, *i.e.* linked to the way urban young speakers ordinarily use language.

valued language largely transmitted in the family and within the community through local associations, and speakers of Lingala, a language spoken in Democratic Republic of Congo that is experienced as an urban lingua franca, and poorly transmitted even if widely spoken.

14 Wiese (2013b) prefers the metaphor of a “feature pond”, which according to her better retains the idea of system.

5 Social Context, Group Identification and Language Change

For CUV to be adequately described, the sociological conditions in which they emerge have to be taken into account. It could be the case that the potential distinctiveness of these vernaculars is not related to an association with several groups—which is more commonly the rule than specificity—, nor to heterogeneity as such, but to the way speakers endorse non-standard features and among them transfers, obviously foreign to the dominant language. What is at stake is not the amount of transfers, but the fact that they are not random results of “imperfect” learning but are adopted by speakers even though they are known to be non-standard. Speakers’ attitudes towards these transfers and the social meaning they carry are thus crucial for CUV.

Since Labov’s seminal paper on the social motivation of linguistic change, speakers’ attitudes have been recognized as among the key factors in language variation and change. In a classical model of change, speakers’ identification with a specific sub-group leads to the use of linguistic forms that may index an affiliation with the members of this sub-group. Once those forms have gained a kind of (in this case, covert) prestige within a group, they may become the norm especially in close-knit networks¹⁵. Identification could then be the speakers’ social motivation for adopting transferred features and contributing to spreading them.

5.1 “Marking” an Identity

It is frequently asserted that the use of non-standard or stigmatized variants are ways for urban young speakers to mark (or index) their identity—in this case an identity reduced to an ethnic basis. It is certainly necessary to distinguish between the identification process that leads speakers to progressively normalize marked variants introduced by a social group they regard as a model, and the process which can show why a given speaker uses one of these variants in a given situation: while identification may be at play at a macro-social level conditioning the circulation of variants in a social environment, it is not necessarily identification which governs speakers’ situated language practices.

15 For Armstrong and Jamin (2002) the socio-demographic composition of urban lower-class neighborhoods favors the spread of linguistic changes: “the vernacular reinforces in-group membership and identity. In terms of social networks, the density and multiplexity of ties within the enclosed environment of the *cités* explain the maintenance of this *banlieue* vernacular, for it has been shown that dense and multiplex social networks act as norm-enforcement mechanisms on every type of social behavior, including of course linguistic.” (122–123).

Several contemporary sociolinguists consider that ways of speaking are driven by identity expression. Among others, Clyne (2000) claims, concerning multiethnolects, that “several minority groups use it collectively to express their minority status and/or as a reaction to that status to upgrade it” (87); and a little further: “this is the expression of a new kind of identity”. In this quote (and in other work on the topic), one idea is presented as resulting from the other: the synchronic use of CUV seen as indexing social membership, and a subjective act expressing this identity. Along the same line, many recent sociolinguistic studies focus on the way “social identities come to be created through language” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004: 370) or on speakers’ ability “to create ‘selves’, personae, or identities with the help of linguistic resources borrowed from other groups than those they belong to by birth” (Nortier and Doorleijn, 2008: 128). In this view language use may be oriented towards identity expression.

While it is clear that social practices (including language practices) project a certain image of their author and can (re)configure social attributes and categories, it has to be wondered whether any speech practice necessarily functions as an “act of identity”. During observations in classrooms, Hambye (2009) noticed, like other authors, instances of strategic uses of stigmatized forms, through which pupils display an exaggerated social or ethnic identity, but also noted that they were able immediately afterwards to switch to another way of speaking indexing another identity, thus blurring the supposed one-to-one relationship between a language and a group. See also Jaspers (2008, 2011) for what youth in Antwerp call “talking illegal”, and Rampton’s work on crossing in England (2005), which also illustrates the way speech forms can be purposefully used to claim or disclaim identity affiliations.

It should not be taken for granted, however, that ordinary speakers in ordinary ways of speaking are continuously badging an “identity affiliation” and that identities are “expressed” through “marking” (see Cameron, 1990 for a criticism of doxa sociolinguistic comments). But for some authors, CUV are seen as ways for youth to contest dominant norms¹⁶, or to designate their alleged multiple linguistic and cultural membership. Yet, such a representation as transgression owes more to the expert’s etic view than to the interactants’ perception. Viewing CUV as in opposition to dominant norms and identities assumes that these practices are situated with respect to a standard language whose borders can be crossed and that speakers draw upon their distance from

16 Jaspers (2011) interestingly shows how in some circumstances, far from being an attitude of contestation, the playful practice called “talking illegal” can be viewed as a norm-enforcement process having the effect of hierarchizing ways of speaking.

the standard language to mark their contestation. But do users feel that way? Their ways of speaking are their ordinary resources in their local environment, part of their everyday repertoire. Thus their main social meaning is not necessarily in counter-position to standard norms. As Samir (MPF, Nacer3) puts it:

- 425 quand on parle en français correct on croit qu'on parle du français
correct.
427 Mais en fait on parle mal.
429 Mais nous on se rend pas compte puisque on croit qu'en fait c'est du
français normal.
434 Et des fois on croit que nous tout le monde utilise ce parler alo- alors
qu'en fait on oublie c'est juste dans notre cité que dans notre milieu.
[‘When we speak in proper French we think we speak proper French. But
in fact we speak badly. But we, we don't realize that because we think
it's normal French. And sometimes we think everybody uses this way to
talk whereas actually we forget that it is only in our inner-city's neighbor-
hood, only in our environment’].

An alleged identity is thus not necessarily badging (in the sense coined by the anthropologist Irwin, 1993) “in counterpoint”, as if popular cultures were constantly positioning themselves in opposition to dominant cultures (Bourdieu, 1983 for a critical assessment): opposition also implies conjunction. With their peers, young speakers rather seem to use marked variants and borrowings as a conventionalized index of peer-group membership (Hambye and Siroux, 2008; Rampton, 2005). Furthermore, in the line of Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) criticism of the way the notion of identity is used in social sciences, invoking identity as the driving force of social and linguistic practices (in this case the selection of forms), is not unproblematic. This conception is either essentialist—if identity is supposed to be pre-categorized and to orient practices as a *cause* (see the quotation from Jaspers in section 2 about linguistic practices “caused by” ethnicity), or insufficient—if identity is viewed as an indeterminate outcome of agency, since it implies that what *explains* linguistic practices is not identity but the socio-historical process of identification that makes people take some individuals as models and adopt something of their ways of speaking.

5.2 *Identification and the (Covert) Prestige of Arabic*

This brings us back to the diachronic process by which features distant from standard monolingual linguistic norms became part of the linguistic repertoire of urban lower-class youth, thus being available for vernacular use and,

under some conditions, mark an identity or a symbolic distance towards the dominant culture. To understand this process, speakers' attitudes towards the way of speaking of the social group they identify with have to be taken into account. Which sub-groups are taken up as models, whose speech is characterized, notably, by nonstandard features and by transfers from migrant languages?

In European contexts where CUV have been observed, specific linguistic sub-groups appear at the core of linguistic transfer, beyond the numerous languages present in urban lower class boroughs. In different situations youth appear to lend more prestige to one of the immigrant languages: Surinamese in Amsterdam (Appel, 1999), Moroccan Arabic in Utrecht (Nortier, 2008), Turkish in Hamburg, Berlin or Mannheim (Auer, 2003; Wiese, 2013a; Keim, 2007), Jamaican Creole and Punjabi in Ashmead or London (Rampton, 2005; Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox and Torgersen, 2011), Maghrebien Arabic in Paris or Grenoble (Billiez, Krief and Lambert, 2003; Gadet, 2013)...

These languages are insightful, as shown by Matras (2009: 151) when he discusses prestige in borrowings. He gives a traditional example of borrowing from a non-prestigious language: the English word *pal* (like other terms in casual English referring to conviviality) comes from Romani, felt as "the speech of a population that distanced itself from the establishment".

In our two French-speaking contexts, Arabic appears indeed to be the most influential language, which can be attributed to various factors. The demographic weight of Arabic-speaking populations is certainly one of them: in France as well as in Belgium (and in the Netherlands), the largest group of individuals with a non-European immigrant background comes from Arab-speaking countries (mainly from Algeria, then Morocco, then Tunisia in France; from Morocco especially in Belgium).

The demographic factor influencing contact is nonetheless dependent on the type of contact. For instance, the limited extent of transmission of Arabic among young speakers of Maghrebien descent¹⁷ may paradoxically favor the spread of forms borrowed from Arabic. In contrast with Arabic, the spread of Turkish in society as a whole is restricted, both in Belgium and in the Netherlands and France. Yet, in Belgium in particular, the rather numerous Turkish community, concentrated in some neighborhoods, maintains the use

¹⁷ According to the demographer Tribalat (1995) the transmission rate in France of Maghrebien Arabic in its different dialectal guises is among the lowest for migrant heritage languages. This is not antagonistic with a revival: some young people seek their roots through studying Arabic (Caubet, 2007), which is quite different from a home language.

of Turkish within the family and more bilingualism than does the Moroccan community (Manço and Crutzen, 2003). One could thus expect to find Turkish forms in Belgian CUV. Yet, we found hardly any in our data (and as far as we know nothing of that kind has been reported in the literature).¹⁸ Young people of Turkish descent appear to keep Turkish as a community language, preventing non-Turkish speakers from coming into contact with their vernacular language. On the contrary, because speakers of Arabic origin are more often in a situation of attrition, they tend to mix codes and to introduce into their French fossilized forms from the family language, which can then be taken up by other members of the peer group, whatever their ethno-cultural roots.

Among the possible reasons, prestige (here, covert prestige) seems a good candidate for the relative importance acquired by Arabic in French CUV:¹⁹ speakers of Arabic descent have a high symbolic capital in urban lower-class boroughs, and their ways of speaking spread among speakers from other linguistic backgrounds. In lower-class areas, Arabic symbolizes virility and toughness and possibly solidarity (Lepoutre, 1997 on the "culture of honor";²⁰ and comments by Muchielli, 1998). Furthermore, the media have played a role in

18 In France too, Turkish is the best transmitted migrant language (see Tribalat, 1995; Noiriél, 2002): Turkish migration is relatively new, and is as in Belgium characterized by closely-knit networks. Tribalat (1995: 46) wrote: "Les immigrés font l'effort de parler français avec leurs enfants, même si c'est en alternance, sauf ceux de Turquie". But according to Montgaillard (2013: 76), it is fashionable in 2013 among youth around Paris to wear T-shirts with the words *wesh kardesh* (*wesh* is Arabic, *kardesh* is a Frenchified Turkish word for "brother"), but this remains to be confirmed; also *wesh murray* (the same, *murray* coming from Romani, *idem*: 78—see also footnote 20). See also *lan* ("guy") as a vocative among Germano-Turkish youth in Germany (Androutsopoulos, 2010).

19 An anecdote can illustrate the role of Arabic, and not only in France. In a paper published in *der Spiegel* in March 2013 presenting the successful rap singer Aykut Anhan, a German of Turkish descent, his way of singing is characterized as "Arabisch klingende Intonation" (Arabic sounding intonation), whereas the singer has not much to do with a Germano-Arabic community. In France too, it has been observed that rap singers from all origins (of migrant descent or not, Blacks, Whites or from the West Indies) make frequent use of Arabic words and/or try to sound Arabic. Arabic then appears to be looked on as meaningful in itself.

20 It is worth noting that Lepoutre's data collected in the 1990s show more focus on the Arabic culture than on the language. Among the quite numerous extracts from his very well documented fieldwork, no more than 6 or 7 words of Arabic are used by the youth, most of whom are of Maghrebian descent. No doubt things have changed a lot in a short while (his fieldwork was done at the beginning of the 1990s, and he is very sensitive to speech).

making this group a prototype of the *racaille* (see Berthaut, 2013 on the making of television news on the topic “banlieue”). The covert prestige and saliency of this group within popular neighborhoods where youngsters are keen to despise dominant norms, may be linked to the stigmatization of Arabs and Muslims in France and in Belgium and to the fact that they became a prototype of lower classes in societies where the social division between classes tends to become ethnicized (see Fassin and Fassin, 2009).

Arabic seems to benefit from covert prestige among urban lower-class youth, as can be seen in this interaction from the MPF corpus, which shows that identification with Arabic culture is not tied to the real practice of Arabic (see also Billiez, Krief and Lambert, 2003):

- 1484 SAM: C'est pas en arabe reuf?
 1486 NAC: Reuf?
 1488 SAM: Ouais.
 1489 NAC: Bah non. Je sais pas.
 1492 SAM: Le reum la reum la reum?
 1494 NAC: La reum <c'est mè>re.
 1495 SAM: <Ouais>. Ouais en arabe.
 1497 NAC: Mais non c'est du verlan. Mère reum.(.) Père rèp. Puis non <père> reuf.
 1503 SAM: <Reuf>.
 1506 SAM: Ah c'était en arabe reup?
 1508 NAC: Non c'est pas l'arabe. Peut-être c'est du verlan.
 1510 SAM: Ah ok <bah je savais pas>.
 1511 NAC: <Par exemple reum c'est> c'est mère c'est du verlan du mère tu vois? (.) Mère reum.
 1516 SAM: Bah nous pour dire non ou tu dis la daronne ou le daron.
 ["SAM: It's not in Arabic reuf?"
 NAC: Reuf?
 SAM: Yes.
 NAC: Well, no. I don't know.
 SAM: The reum the reum the reum?
 NAC: The reum it's mo<ther>.
 SAM: <Yeah>. Yeah in Arabic.
 NAC: But no it's in verlan. Mother reum.(.) Father rèp. Then no <father> reuf.
 SAM: reuf. Oh it was in Arabic reup?
 NAC: No it's not Arabic. Maybe it's verlan.
 SAM: Oh ok <well I didn't know>.

NAC: <For instance *reum* it's> it's *mère* it's *verlan* from *mère* you see? (.)

Mère reum.

SAM: Well among us to say, no, you say *le daron* or *la daronne*.']

Here, Samir appears not to know the origin of *reup* or *reum* (verlanized terms for *père* and *mère*), but his first hypothesis is that it is from Arabic, perhaps due to the proximity of the forms with words like *seum* or *sbeul*, really borrowed from Arabic even if the meaning changed slightly when they migrated into French. There are at least two ways of interpreting this interaction. One way would be to see it as evidence of the symbolic prestige of Arabic. The second one is more related to the interactional context and to Samir's specific history as well as to his imagined community. Samir has an Algerian father but a German mother. He does not speak Arabic (nor German) although he claims to be Algerian, at least when talking with Nacer, an Algerian investigator who seems to query Samir's algerianity (Nacer points out that Samir does not speak Arabic, his ID is French, he was born in France, and he says a little bit later *j'ai jamais vu mon pays* [I've never seen my country]—what Samir would have said concerning his identity to another investigator can only be speculated on—see Gadet, Kaci, forthcoming). The two interpretations are not contradictory, and Samir has the last word: he and his friends use another word (*daron/daronne*: old words from traditional argot—line 1516).

This interaction is also to be linked to the frequent eagerness of speakers to find a source (they would probably say “an explanation”) for everything felt as un-French, as in this other passage earlier in the interview with Samir (Nacer3, 319): *oseille c'est pas du verlan tu vois mais je crois oseille c'est black* [*oseille* it's not verlan you see but I think *oseille* it's black']—*oseille* is in fact an old argotic word for ‘money’ with no relation to blackness or ethnicity.

The role attributed to Arabic certainly needs to be further investigated but preliminary observations show that it carries a specific symbolic and social meaning that clearly goes far beyond the simple fact of being the language of the largest migrant population, as well as the possible expression of an ethno-cultural background.

5.3 A Socio-Ethno-Cultural Affiliation

Does this mean that a kind of *ethnic* affiliation orients the contact-induced changes of French in the *banlieues*, leading to borrowings from Arabic?

Although the most obvious social meaning of borrowings from Arabic could be to index ethnicity, ethno-cultural affiliation is not necessarily the main (or the only) factor for the spread of these borrowings. Indeed, speakers' emic perspectives on CUV show that they are primarily used by and

associated with a *social* group more than with an ethnic group: this group being, for insiders, the people of the neighborhood²¹ (see the extracts in section 1). Another evidence of the *social* characterization of the *français des banlieues* lies in the fact that it is often opposed to the “*parler de bourges*” (‘upper middle-class speech’ following Hatim, a speaker from Liège, in his interview with P. Hambye—“bourges” is an argotic word for “bourgeois”), “*langage bourgeois*” or “*distingue*” (Billiez, Krief and Lambert, 2003; *middle-class/distinguished language*—see also the title of Doran, 2004, which opposes “bourges” to “racaille”). The speakers’ own descriptions of the “*langage bourgeois*” and of its vernacular counterpart the *français de la rue* or *langage racaille*, mainly focus on differences of register (e.g. “good” or “expert” vs. “bad”, “common”—variants of we-code/they-code) and not on borrowed features that may index ethnicity.

If expressions like *parler marocain/algérien* (“Moroccan/Algerian speech”—or “to speak Moroccan/Algerian”) sometimes appear in our data, they seem to express mainly the viewpoint of outsiders, even if they are also sometimes reappropriated by youth. In the same vein, while young lower-class people in London speak of “slang” to characterize their way of speaking English, outsiders say that they sound as if they were “talking black” (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox and Torgersen, 2011: 153). There is much evidence of such perceptions in Berlin: “many Germans in Kreuzberg do not speak German anymore, that is, they speak this Kiezdeutsch, so that, when you do not see them, you think there are Turks or Arabs speaking, but then you turn round, they are totally normal German kids” (a middle-aged Berliner, Wiese, Freywald and Mayr, 2009)—see also Tissot, Schmid and Galliker (2011) who quote the title of a Zurich newspaper: “*Warum Schweizer Jugendliche reden, als wären sie Immigrantenkinder*” [Why Swiss youth speak as if they were children of immigrants]; and Androutsopoulos (2010) for several similar media titles.

Yet, CUV obviously have to do with ethno-cultural affiliation. Studies have shown for instance that for some phenomena at least, speakers of foreign origin were often in the lead (Audrit, 2009 for Brussels; Bijvoet and Fraurud, 2012 for Stockholm; Jamin, 2004 for La Courneuve near Paris, among others), and that in some contexts, variants associated with “youth language” were avoided by speakers with no migrant background. The combination of

21 This could be related to the fact that the affiliation with a given area (the *quartier*—‘borough’—, the *cité*, felt as a *territory*) is one of the most salient categories which young people draw upon (Lepoutre, 1997; Armstrong and Jamin, 2002—which appears quite clearly in rap songs as well as in our corpus data). Deppermann (2007) concerning Germany, speaks of people being “oriented towards a ‘ghetto’ identity”.

social and ethno-cultural meanings conveyed by the “*langage bourgeois*” is also clear, as in the following extract from Billiez, Krief and Lambert (2003): “*ceux qu(i) ont d(e) l’argent et tout / c’est des Français quoi / i(l)s sont tous hein / c’est tous des blancs*” [those who have money and all that stuff / they are French people they are all eh / they are all Whites].

If the ethno-cultural indexical value of borrowings from Arabic or other immigrant languages has thus not disappeared, it may have been superseded by a more general social meaning indexing an affiliation with a socially stigmatized and underprivileged group, lower social class, from a migrant background... In summary, we surmise that in French CUV, ethno-culturally marked forms from immigrant languages (especially from Arabic) are felt as likely to index a kind of ethnicized class affiliation, a “socio-ethnic identity” (Jamin, Trimaille and Gasquet-Cyrus, 2006: 353, as well as Jaspers, 2011 on Antwerp pupils playing at “talking illegal”), and not as directly indexing ethnicity, even though speakers may draw upon the indexical relation between these linguistic forms and ethno-culturally defined groups to claim a real or imagined ethnic identity. As sociolects, CUV are thus likely to distinguish insiders who can appropriate ethno-culturally marked linguistic forms from outsiders unfamiliar with both the social and ethnic indexical meanings that their usage conveys, even though some features spread among all youth, leading core users to a constant renewal of the lexical emblematic forms of their way of speaking (see Conein and Gadet, 1998).

As Rampton (2011: 277–278) pointed out about the British situation, speakers of lower-class urban areas evolve in “a social space bounded by both ethnic and class difference”, where the circulation of linguistic forms from stigmatized immigrant groups fosters the development of “a set of conventionalized interactional procedures that reconciled and reworked their ethnic differences within broadly shared experience of a working class position in British society”. In other words, forms from immigrant languages that are felt to be prestigious are appropriated by urban lower-class speakers, whatever their own linguistic background, because they are able to manifest in daily interactions a common social experience.

6 Posture and Footing: Performance Towards Emphasis and Intensity

Beyond speakers’ attitudes towards the transfers from immigrant languages being linked to their capacity to index a common *social* culture, characteristics of CUV gain part of their social value from the pragmatic role they can play in verbal interactions.

6.1 *Intensity and Emphasis*

In the kind of contact situation in which CUV emerge, some contact-induced phenomena may be understood through their pragmatic association. Matras (1998, 2009) for instance explored the way functional, pragmatic or communicative factors may orient the process of borrowing. Following him and other authors exploring contact, could it be hypothesized that the borrowed features of CUV have to do with the ordinary communicative practices of their users?

According to several authors, especially the ethnographer Lepoutre (1997) in the wake of the seminal studies by Labov (1972), a major characteristic of urban lower-class youth verbal repertoire in interactions is public spectacularization, embodied in particular in the role of performance played by ritual insults, verbal dueling, sounding or swear words. In particular, verbal dueling relies heavily on the capacity of speakers to alternate ritual expressions and innovations that may help them to get the upper hand in the dueling. Borrowings thus appear as a resource to enlarge the repertoire and renew words and expressions that have lost their expressive power because of their frequency.

Moreover, the frequent use of forms from this repertoire appears as an index of belonging to the community. Thus new forms introduced by core members rapidly spread in the peer group. For instance, during fieldwork in Liège, Hambye saw the Arabic word *himar* ('donkey') starting to be used frequently at school by the core members of the peer groups he was following. After one week, most students said *himar* all the time, ritually or in conflictual interactions. The enthusiasm for *himar* quickly declined, but it remained part of the repertoire of the groups.

As the verbal practices of "street culture" rely heavily on performance, spectacularization and competition relationships (see especially Lepoutre, 1997), a good mastery of verbal expression constitutes a resource for gaining power. In street culture, core members of peer groups have to embody their status within the group through a specific public stance and verbal behavior, often represented by hip-hop culture and rap singers. Hence, the physico-verbal attitude of CUV speakers is realized in what Selting (1994) called an "emphatic position". A link can thus be hypothesized between the features of the CUV and this emphatic stance.

This can be easily observed at the phonic level (for features possibly related to emphatic phonetic forms, especially for intonation, see Lehka-Lemarchand, 2007; Caubet, 2007; Fagyal, 2010; Fagyal and Stewart, 2011, and Paternostro, 2014 who argues that what makes "*accent des banlieues*" is an emphatic intonation + the accumulation of other CUV features). Nor is it too difficult to witness it in the lexicon (see the current usage of *trop* in uses close to *très*, as well as

the frequent use of expressions such as *mortel*, *ça déchire*, *mort de rire*, *grave + adj...*)—types of intensification which Lodge (1989) already claimed were constants in the history of “*français populaire*”—and probably beyond, of lower-class vernaculars.

Even if an emphatic stance is more difficult to figure out on the syntactic or discursive levels, it is sometimes attested (perhaps not in the same way for all languages) and certainly has to be further investigated. For German, Wiese (2013a) points out the role of forms she calls “*intensivierend*” (intensifying), like a specific use of the adverb *voll*, which features in several casual varieties of German, but is much more frequent in Kiezdeutsch (*voll lustig*, *voll oft*, *voll lachen*—see also Auer (2013) for other examples of intensive phenomena in Kiezdeutsch). In the same line, discourse markers used as “intensifiers” (Labov, 1972: 378–380) are among the features of French CUV. The discourse markers (and swearings when used in this way) based on borrowings from Arabic seem to have a high expressive power among speakers observed in Belgian schools as well as in the MPF Parisian inquiries: intensifiers like *zarma*, *wesh* or *waya* are frequent inside syntactically French based utterances.

6.2 *Pragmatic Value of Intensity*

When used as discourse markers, forms transferred from Arabic do not need to convey much semantic value: they can thus be adopted by speakers who do not know Arabic and who do not associate these forms with well-defined meanings. For example Fatima, a student in a school in Liège, answered the following way when asked about the meaning of *waya* she was using frequently: “*Ben je sais pas, on dit ça comme ça, tout le monde dit ça. C’est de l’arabe. C’est comme dire putain*” [Well I don’t know, it is just what we say everybody says this. It’s Arabic. It’s like saying fuck] (fieldnotes).

As already underlined, speakers who contribute more to the spread of borrowings are not necessarily directly in contact with the source language. Having only a partial knowledge of the immigrant language, they don’t borrow to fill a lexical gap in French. Their mastery of forms in the immigrant language works only for casual everyday subjects and frequent formulas. Examples of this process are numerous: see Pooley (2012) for French pupils without a Maghrebian origin in a school in Lille using about 40 words of Arabic, a language they do not master outside these few words or expressions; or Rampton (2011: 288), for whom the style he describes “features some Punjabi in ritualised utterances (e.g. greeting, swearing, etc.)” but “doesn’t require high levels of proficiency in the language”. Then, what speakers are seeking in these borrowings is an expressive power and a social semiotic meaning, not a semantic value.

In summary, language practices in the street culture in France and in Belgium favor the borrowing of words from immigrant languages, especially Arabic, as well as their rapid spread within the peer groups. Of course, not all “emergent forms” (if such a thing can be defined) are to be considered in this perspective, but some in the list of phenomena in section 3.1. could be. Indeed, the emergence of some of these features in CUV may have been favored by the quest for linguistic forms likely to express an emphatic stance. In this sense, the palatalization of plosives and the so-called “banlieue prosodic pattern” (accent des banlieues) could be viewed as outcomes of articulatory reinforcement (for palatalization) and emphasizing tendencies (for prosodic pattern). In the same vein, Armstrong and Jamin (2002) consider word-final glottalised /r/ in sequences such as in *ta mère*, as functioning to “announce or mark an emphasis.”

We can observe examples in our data where borrowings from Arabic and features linked to an emphatic stance combine in agonistic interactions. Youssef, a 15-year-old speaker in Liège, is teased by his mates while answering the inquirer’s questions very conscientiously during an informal discussion in the main hall of the school. He seems to ignore their remarks for a while, but suddenly utters: *biheh je vais casser la jambe à quelqu’un / faites les malins fils de chien* [*biheh* I’m gonna break someone’s leg / keep mocking you bastards].

In this utterance Youssef marks his status in the peer-group (not everyone in the group could take such an “aggressive” stance—even if it is a ritualized aggressiveness): *biheh* (glossed by speakers as *tranquille* ‘quiet’) is a discourse marker borrowed from Arabic, *fils de chien* (literally ‘son of a dog’) an insult in relation with Arabic oral culture and the prosodic pattern on the penultimate syllable of *malins* is perceived as typical of *français des banlieues*.

If the current use of these features does reveal something about the way they are integrated in the speakers’ repertoire, the fact that their usage is linked to pragmatic and interactional functions may show that these functions are crucial in the process of contact-induced change. However, the explanation is certainly quite complex, and multiple causation could also be at work: pragmatic factors may have converged with other social factors (marking the crossing of ethnocultural boundaries) and structural linguistic factors to favor the spread of these features in the speakers’ repertoires.

7 Conclusions

Our objective in this chapter was to capture what makes CUV distinct from other vernacular practices and to discuss the role of language contact in their

differentiation. We first questioned the implications of some frequently used labels, as naming a variety is a categorization by pointing out which group of speakers are assumed to be its prototypical users or which group affiliation is indexed through its use. We saw that most of the current labels link these varieties with groups defined by age, areas they live in, and/or ethno-cultural origins.

While the first two criteria might be too broad, the last one could be too narrow: too broad in that studies on "youth language" show that these practices are used by groups that are not simply composed of young people or of people from inner-cities, but more generally of young speakers from low social classes living in urban areas with a high rate of multiculturalism (see e.g., Rampton, 2011); too narrow in that suburban speakers have diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds and their linguistic practices can hardly index primarily ethnicity. Beyond the problem of defining ethnicity, we showed that class, ethno-cultural origin and immigrant background are intertwined in affiliations indexed by those ways of speaking, which grasp one of their characteristics, namely forms coming from immigrant languages. This obviously brings to the fore the notion that they are an outcome of language contact.²²

In discussing the relation between CUV and contact phenomena we raised the issue of the *limits of the concept of "contact"*, which is all too often taken as obvious and self-explanatory, as if migratory movements and the linguistic contacts they produce could "explain" linguistic heterogeneity in CUV, as if the social presence of several languages necessarily implies the spread of forms from these languages into the majority language. Too often linguistic contact is taken for an obvious outcome of social contact and the factors at play seem to be considered too self-evident to be discussed, as is the case for instance with factors such as word frequency or the demographic weight of linguistic communities instead of broader ecological considerations. We can thus wonder how far approaches in terms of contact do select the really relevant factors, instead of general factors that can be easily isolated and labelled such as frequency or regularity, as well as communicative or cognitive perspectives that would make it possible to build a borrowing scale (Thomason, 2001: 70; Matras, 2009: 155 for a discussion on the hierarchy scales of borrowability proposed in the literature). In summary, "contact" is a convenient notion to explain heterogeneity in vernaculars, rather than a totally helpful conceptual tool as long as the processes embraced under this notion are not thoroughly analyzed.

22 Ethnically defined categories appear to be part of a general shift from the social to the ethnic characterization of discriminated populations (see the title of Fassin and Fassin, 2009).

This paper's objectives were mostly theoretical: useful research avenues already exist and we tried to follow their path for analyzing the role of contact in French CUV, pointing out the complex intricacy of social factors potentially driving contact phenomena. In order to understand the situations in urban underprivileged areas, social attitudes towards immigrant languages have to be taken into account as well as the norms governing verbal interactions in the "street culture" in lower-class urban boroughs. The interest of this hypothesis is twofold. Of course it helps to show the role of borrowings, but it also helps to understand ways of speaking which are not due to borrowings but can be considered in relation to emphasis.

It is of course always risky to try to understand the presence of linguistic features in linguistic practices by such factors, as they are difficult to grasp. It is also difficult to directly *observe* causal relationships between phenomena of "social" and "linguistic" levels. Yet, such an endeavor has to be more often undertaken in order to take seriously the idea that language is a social phenomenon.

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