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**“On the importance of (not) being French in a multilingual setting:
recording data in Cameroon”**

This presentation examines some methodological problems concerning recordings and transcriptions of empirical data in some language practices found in multilingual contexts in Cameroon: *French*, *Pidgin* (also named *Kamtok* by some linguists), *English* and *Camfranglais* (also known as *Francanglais* in the literature). In doing this, factors such as the researcher’s identity (who may be an “insider” or an “outsider” to a specific speech community), the status and the functions of the co-existing languages have to be taken into account.

As these “languages” /“varieties” are in contact with each other and some of them are the result of language contact, the boundaries between them are often fuzzy, as in the case of Pidgin English and English in the Anglophone area, everyday oral French and Camfranglais or, even, Pidgin English and Camfranglais in the Francophone area. Variation is omnipresent and depends on a lot of factors such as interference from the native languages, knowledge of the official languages (English and/or French) as well as discourse strategies. Contact-induced variation at a structural level will be illustrated by a change going on in Pidgin which concerns gender distinction. Here again methodological problems in recording data will be discussed.

The question raised in the workshop program about a “descriptive standard' as backdrop for the analysis” when studying variation will also be discussed, with special reference to French and Camfranglais. Indeed, a lot of descriptions of French spoken in Cameroon have been “differential analyses”, which refer to Standard French instead of referring to everyday French spoken in France. The danger is to consider as specific of Cameroonian French (and due to interference from languages in contact or insufficient knowledge of French) phenomena which are found among native speakers of French in France as well.