Linguistics in the era of digitalization as one of the modern means of language enrichment (productivity of the Verlan language)

Abstract. This article examines one of the most common forms of the substandard of the modern French language from a linguistic and extralinguistic point of view. The linguistic phenomenon of Verlan – the Verlan language, which originated in the youth environment, being one of the ways of forming neologisms of the modern French language, manifests itself differently at each new turn of time, demonstrating either a decline or a sharp rise. As is known, the rules of language coding cannot be separated from the totality of processes occurring in society. Can the popularity of Verlan be explained by some social tension, intellectual conflict between people of different generations, different social strata, or is its additional purpose associated with the desire to convey maximum information with a minimum of words in the age of new technologies, in the age of digitalization? What are the sources of this phenomenon?

1 Introduction

Entering into a "different" culture, mastering a "foreign" culture, is a complex and lengthy process. As is known, assigning a new system of relevant information to foreign cultural subjects for oneself corresponds to the process of secondary socialization. In our opinion, the dependence of perception on past experience of repeated observations, in the broad sense of the word, facilitates the process of adaptation to the socially significant norms, traditions, and customs adopted in a certain culture, aimed at mutual understanding in the process of communication. This article has pronounced linguocultural and linguodidactic goals and can be considered as a practical implementation in the applied aspect of learning modern French in the era of digitalization as one of the modern means of language enrichment.

2 The main part

A diverse picture of the "speech world" has existed at all times. And this is a natural process, since we live in an ever-changing world, which is naturally reflected in our speech. But in different periods, the volume and causes of linguistic changes in speech have different reasons, both interlinguistic (external) and intralinguistic (internal).
always been a language of allegory, in which phenomena, things, objects of the surrounding reality were identified with the help of metaphors (in the broadest sense of this phenomenon), i.e. a phenomenon characteristic to varying degrees for all languages, Aesopian language, is familiar to us from the school curriculum. In various versions, there were secret languages of hunters, a conditional language of riders, a courtly language, as well as various kinds of slangs, which are an attribute of associations adapted to certain goals and the organizational structure of specific groups of people in society. Linguists have been studying the causes of language changes for centuries: this includes the economy of linguistic means – maximum information with a minimum set of means, the ability to decode a message, the principle of least effort, reduction, elision, contraction, borrowing a large amount of vocabulary, changes in the elements of grammar and phonetics – associated with social changes, intensive language contacts and migration. Familiar words lose their usual meaning. New words, new meanings, pronunciation and tempo of speech as signs of the new time are explicated both in the linguistic picture of the world and in the linguistic persona itself.

However, in different periods of time, the scope of use of the coded language either expands or contracts. The French language, as is known, has been rich in secret languages since ancient times. Argot, jargons, slang, verlans are not a new phenomenon in the language. As many linguists note, such phenomena have been found in novels since the 12th century (“Tristan et Iseult”), and of course, especially clearly in the novels of V. H. Hugo, where this phenomenon was inextricably linked with the language of lowlifes: alms people, beggars, thieves, and was also found in the everyday life of the inhabitants of the Belly of Paris and its suburbs, since the main goal of these groups of people was “to disguise their thoughts, to speak vaguely, to be understood in a narrow circle, to keep the secrets of the craft.” And today argot is used quite often in everyday speech, in family circles, with close friends... Argot often blocks our understanding of the language, and besides, argot in France, in French-speaking Switzerland, in Belgium, in Canada is a completely different argot.

Students often say, “we understand when teachers talk to us, when we read the press, but when we watch modern films, even with subtitles, when we listen to modern French songs, especially rap, when they, the French, communicate with each other in a rather informal situation, as close friends, we do not understand many words and cannot find them in the dictionary.”

We, a group of foreign language teachers and Russian language teachers for foreigners at Kabardino-Balkarian State University, decided to conduct an experiment with confident users of a foreign language (in our case, French and Russian languages of the B1–B2 level) in order to understand what blocks their understanding of oral speech and its reproduction. And, as it turned out, there are several reasons for this. In our opinion, it is worth highlighting the main three aspects when studying a foreign language, which must be known and which are systematically encountered if you want to understand speakers of an authentic, francais souche – native language (in our case, French). These three aspects are closely interconnected and extremely important (fig. 1): 

1) les expressions françaises – French set expressions;
2) les contractions (que l'on fait à l'orale) – contractions that are very often found in oral speech, closely related to the development of new technologies;
3) argot (jargon, verlan) – argot (slang, jargon, verlan), a closed lexical subsystem of special nominations showing belonging to various social groups.

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Fig. 1. Main three aspects when studying a foreign language

Expressions françaises (French set expressions)

Contractions (abbreviations, Internet-contractions)

Argot (argot, slang, jargon, verlan)

As the French often say, "problème→solution"—every problem requires a solution. As for "expressions françaises"—French set expressions, they are studied in universities in classes and special courses on phraseology, semantics and pragmatics of modern discourse. To practice them in oral speech, we can advise to listen more, read more, and consult phraseological dictionaries more often. However, the most frequently used phraseological expressions in colloquial speech must be practiced in practical classes. They should be given, in our opinion, according to the frequency of their use and, of course, in the appropriate contexts—

-C'est faux (lit. it's not a lie)—c'est vrai (it's true);
-Ça marche! (lit. it goes)—d'accord (agreed, deal);
-Ça n'est pas dégueu! (lit. this isn't disgusting)—ça est bon!
-Tu t'en sors? (lit. did you come out of there?);
-Ça s'est bien passé?—Ça est bien passé?
-Ça est dommage (lit. it's a shame)—Ça est parfait, irreprochable, impeccable—excellent, flawless;
-Ça a été—Ça s'est bien passé?
-Ça a été?
-Ça a été bien?
-Ça a été pas?
-Ça a été bien pas?
-Seul Ça a été pas?
-Ça a été bien pas?
-Ça a été bête (lit. it was stupid)
-Ça a été bête—Ça n'a pas été bête
-Ça a été gentil (lit. it was kind)
-Ça a été gentil—Ça a été répugnant
-Ça a été gentil—Ça a été choquant
-Ça a été gentil—Ça a été dégoûtant

One of the ways to form a new word in colloquial speech is "contraction"—clipping of words, the understanding and use of which usually does not cause difficulties for Francophones. Contractions that foreigners quickly get used to have become almost the...
There is also an increasing tendency to shorten words using capital letters. This is called “alphabetism”, that is, the letters are pronounced as in the alphabet, as found in abbreviations: CPG (contracted) into one or more letters:

- CPG is noteworthy that shortened words “do” without vowels, as if the word is really “contracted” into one or more letters:

  - JPP (je suis) is explained by the desire to speed up the communication process. It
  - is not clearly pronounced, the meaning is understood through associative connections, i.e. in
  - strict clarity. Syllables are skipped or poorly articulated, sounds are often “blurred”, that is,
  - rarely, but there is a type of contraction that
  - is pronounced as in the alphabet, as found in abbreviations:

  - CPG

  - is noteworthy that shortened words “do” without vowels, as if the word is really
  - “contracted” into one or more letters:

  - CPG

s’il te plaît, s’il vous plaît (welcome), ne t’inquiète pas (don’t worry), ça c’est ça (it, is), à tout à l’heure (see you today, see you at the appointed time),

is noteworthy that shortened words “do” without vowels, as if the word is really “contracted” into one or more letters:

- CPG

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Digital technologies and internal factors (communicative forms) determine the emergence of new traditions in the language, which sometimes leads to changes in language norms. It is known that one of the popular ways of forming neologisms in modern French is youth slang. Leaving aside the general theoretical problem of distinguishing argot, jargon, slang, and Verlan, which are being actively developed by many linguists, we consider them collectively as a form of substandard from a linguistic and extralinguistic position.

In the 70-80s of the 20th century, such argot words (mots argotiques) as *le boulot*, *le job*, *le taf* were often used instead of the word “le travail” – “work”. The verb “travailler” was replaced by the verbs “bosser” – “to toil and moil”, “taffer” – “to work hard”; *une bagnole, une caisse* (wheels) instead of *une voiture, une automobile* (car); *de la tune, du blé, des balles, du pognon* – instead of *l’argent* – money (in English: dough, green); *une bécan* instead of *une moto* (motorcycle), *un pote* – *un(e) ami(e)* – buddy, *un bahut* – *une école* (school), *une baraque* – *une maison* (house), *un bouquin* – *un livre* (book), *un truc* – *une chose* (thing), *la flotte* – *la pluie* (rain), etc... popular among young people, today they are marked in many dictionaries as “familier”. There is no age differentiation in their use. They do not cause difficulties and begin to live their own life in the language.

And today, one of the sources of replenishment of les mots argot (slang) remains the dialectal influence, local dialects: *boué* – *buoy*, *cape* – sailing “with minimal windage”.

Arriving in France for the first time and encountering such “harsh French slang” as Verlan, even those who have studied French for many years, who are called “confident users of the language,” experience a big blow to their self-esteem. The word “verlan” itself translates as “reverse”, “inside out” and “upside down” and is more common in large cities in spoken language on pronunciation and spelling: an first person singular pronoun moi → oim [wam]; tu vas chez oim; toi (you) →oit [wat], fou (crazy) →ouf [uf], frère (brother) →ref [reuf]; mere (mother) →rem [rem]; père (father) →rep [ræp]. Fête (holiday) →teuf: *La teuf est ouf.* [La fête est ouf – The holiday is crazy cool]. This type of word formation in Verlan is quickly deciphered even by beginners in learning the French language and begins to be used by them.

Verlan, as a linguistic phenomenon, does not have strict rules of formation. Everything was clear when femme (woman) → gave the form meuf, but suddenly it began to appear more often with double rearrangement of syllables: meuf→ feumeu and with an expansion of meanings – acquaintance, close friend, girlfriend, she friend; la musique (music) → la zic→ la zikmu: J’écoute la zikmu. A characteristic feature of Verlan is its prevalence and
So, for example, voiture (car) → turevoi; porte–monnaie (wallet) → portne → nepor; crier (scream) → crissave; comprendre → racave; fumer de la drogue → tétave... [10: see glossary in Bachmann Ch, Basier L.] The difficulty also lies in the fact that Verlan, as a common type of real-life French oral speech, is more than a play on words, more than a phonetic and lexical distortion of words. The emergence of social networks and a large number of bloggers has turned the idea of the public word upside down. The new “colloquialism” finds itself not only in oral speech, it is increasingly heard in songs, films, finds itself on stage in plays, and penetrates into fiction. This way of expressing a thought may be associated with an insane information flow, the desire to replace generally accepted cultural patterns, norms of speech with personal preferences, a reaction to general violations of norms in life, the desire to identify the self-identity of “one’s own”, “close” in the reality around us with its modern speed, new information technologies, with the need for young people to navigate extremely difficult conditions, overcoming the experiences of these difficult circumstances. This is not formal coding. Verlan expresses itself differently at each new turn of time. In the early 80s of the 20th century, a kind of “Verlan” boom was observed, which caused cognitive dissonance between parents and their children. (see the huge number of publications in the French media). By the end of the 90s of the 20th century, there was a certain tendency towards a decline in the use of Verlan. This was partly true. But the rules of language coding cannot be separated from the totality of many other processes taking place in society. Today, more than twenty years later, Verlan, as French linguists note, is rising from the ashes, going beyond the already studied traditional descriptions. Can the rise in the use of Verlan be explained by the desire to convey maximum information with a minimum of words in the age of digitalization, or does this phenomenon in language have an additional purpose as a desire to “reverse” the cultural norms embedded in society, in everyday life: backwards“unfamiliar” or “new” in their language. And this can be explained by the fact that a person by nature strives to maintain stability, to normalize their idea of the world around them and about themselves, as if ordering their life, separating it from chaos. The widespread use of Verlan by bloggers is a new rise, great variety, and room for creativity. The advent of social networks has turned the idea of the public speech upside down. Modern French is experiencing a third wave of vulgarization. As noted by Sh. Bashman and L. Bazier, the influence of substandard vocabulary on the language is greater than ever [10]. That is why many linguists actively return to the problems of the linguistic and extralinguistic nature of slang, to its cultural and speech assessment, paying attention to the connection with other substandard strata, considering the specifics of the lexicography of the substandard and various dictionaries of slang, identifying various functions of slang. Along with evaluative, nominative, identification, emotional and expressive functions, they distinguish linguocultural and worldview functions, which makes this problem cross disciplinary. Does this phenomenon threaten the language and identity of society? If before, this caused a lot...
of discussions among linguists regarding the preservation of the norms of language, the originality of the life of society, today language and speech are considered as a developing, self-purifying, self-organizing unique and universal system in which each generation is formed and lives.

3 Conclusion

The problem under study is undoubtedly localized in the scientific field of the theory of linguoculturology, since the goal of mastering a foreign language code (in our case, French Verlan) is successful real or potential intercultural communication. In the light of these problems, it is necessary, in our opinion, to consider the cultural potential of the Verlan language, with the cultural elements embedded in it, reflecting the outer and inner world of a person, which is today an integral part of the development of modern French.

However, it should be noted that this phenomenon is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. The study of active processes occurring today in the modern French language is confirmed by the formation of a new scientific paradigm at the intersection of cognitive linguistics, cultural studies, sociology, psycholinguistics, and intercultural communication, which explains the interpenetration of sciences to solve a particular problem.

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SHS Web of Conferences 195, 04005 (2024) LED 2024
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