

## **“En mode crime lyrical”**

Or an analysis of non-standard language in a corpus of selected francophone rap tracks

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This article investigates the use of non-standard language in a corpus of selected francophone rap tracks containing 136 tracks from more than 60 different rappers. The following research question is being tackled: to what extent do French rappers use slang, *verlan*, colloquialisms, vulgarities, foreign borrowings, and abbreviations, and how are these words used? This study relies on a lexicographic analysis to produce quantitative results which are then analysed qualitatively by means of extract analyses. The general conclusion from this analysis is that, on average, French rappers do not deviate that much from standard French, since 93% of their vocabulary is perfectly standard. This finding confirms what other researchers in the field found, but on a wider scale. Since colloquial words are the most widely used NSL category in the corpus, this study shows that French rappers' NSL vocabulary is not oversaturated with cryptic language. In fact, all the cryptic NSL categories combined (slang, *verlan*, and combinations) account for around only 2% of the corpus.

### **1. Introduction and methodology**

Over the last twenty-five years, French rap has enjoyed increasing success in France and the French-speaking world. For many young French-speaking people,

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rappers have a much more central place in their lives than classic French literature. The impact of French rappers is especially strong on language use. French rap artists use cryptic and vulgar words with influences from American rap and various cultures. Such words sometimes cross over to the general population and find their ways into movies, books and even conventional dictionaries. In this context, Jean-Jacques Nattiez (in Martin 2010: 15) remarks that rap music can and in fact “must” be the object of serious scientific research. On a more personal note, my interest in this research got sparked by a simple observation: many of my foreign friends who were otherwise fluent in French could not understand French rap well, if at all. It was often necessary to explain the meaning of several words which I would later call “non standard”. This led to a desire to quantify the presence of such hard-to-understand terms in a systematic and scientific manner, which culminated in a study of the determinants of non-standard language (NSL) in French rap, of which this article presents the quantitative findings of the corpus as a whole.

To be more precise, this paper will investigate the use of NSL in a corpus of selected francophone rap tracks. This study will rely on a lexicographic analysis to produce quantitative results which will then be analysed qualitatively by means of extract analyses. More specifically, the following research question will be tackled: to what extent (i.e. calculating the number of tokens and the percentages of the total tokens) do French rappers use foreign borrowings (1), colloquial and vulgar words (2), slang (3), abbreviations (4), *verlan* (5), and any combination of these categories. These NSL categories were selected after reviewing the literature on language in French rap (see e.g. Westphal 2012; Hassa 2010; or Martin 2010) and *Français contemporain des cités* (FCC, i.e. contemporary suburban French) (see e.g. El-Kolli 2013; or Goudaillier 1998), as well as carrying out preliminary analyses to see what types of NSL could be found in French rap. Then, the next step was to define them precisely.

(1) Words were counted as borrowings from foreign languages if:

- a. They were labelled as such in the *Petit Robert* (e.g. *anglicisme* – anglicism) (Rey and Rey-Debove 2011).
- b. If a word from another language was used when a French alternative exists (e.g. *gun* for *fusil*).

If a word had a foreign etymology but was not recognised as a borrowing by the *Petit Robert*, then it did not count as a borrowing (e.g. *golf*). The only exception is the word *rap*: it was not counted as English because of its lack of equivalent in French and because of its prevalence.

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(2) Words were considered colloquial or vulgar if they were labelled as such in the *Petit Robert* (e.g. *familier*: colloquial; *insulte*: insult; *vulgaire*: vulgar; *péjoratif*: derogatory; or *méprisant*: despising). Even when a word was etymologically from another language, if the *Petit Robert* considered it to be colloquial, then the colloquial aspect of the word was foregrounded. In some instances, the *Petit Robert* considered some words to be both colloquial and another category (e.g. *abbreviation*). In such cases, the colloquial label was ignored because most NSL words are, to some extent, colloquial as well.

(3) Slang words were problematic because the meaning of slang can be quite broad. In this analysis, the following types of words were counted as slang:

- a. words labelled as *argot* (slang) in the *Petit Robert*.
- b. those not present in the *Petit Robert*, but found in dictionaries that specialise in French slang with no information about their origin if it could not be verified otherwise.
- c. terms not found in the dictionary although their meaning could be found online without any information regarding the etymology.

Any word that could not be defined (i.e. their definition was 'unknown' in the database) automatically fell into this category. This decision was taken after considering the fact that the number of unknown words was relatively small and did not warrant extensive etymological research. In most instances, the origin of unknown words is clearly undocumented modern suburban slang. Any mistakes would be rare and quantitatively unimportant.

(4) All apocopes, aphereses, initialisms and acronyms were counted as abbreviations. For some time, it proved to be difficult to decide whether or not to include acronyms and initialisms referring to official organisations, such as *OTAN* (NATO), *ONU* (UN), *BRP* (judiciary police), *BAC* (anti-criminality brigade), which are common everyday utterances, often better known in their abbreviated forms rather than unabbreviated. The main argument in favour of restricting them is that using such abbreviations is the norm rather than the exception and is accepted in formal writing. However, in the end, such words were counted as abbreviations. The main problem when adopting the above restriction was that drawing the line became difficult. No clear definition of acceptable versus unacceptable abbreviations could be used and there was a great risk of sometimes accepting one word and later on rejecting a similar one.

(5) Words were counted as *verlan* if they were formed according to the rules of *verlan* (see e.g. Antoine 1998). These rules are fairly complex and go beyond the

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scope of this article, but they can be summarised by saying that the syllables of words get inverted. In most instances, it was easy to notice that they had been changed. In some cases, however, these words could be easily mistaken for modern suburban slang, especially when combined with abbreviations or double *verlan*. This is why the etymology of words was emphasised.

After establishing clear guidelines for the analysis, the next step was to select the corpus. As one of the objectives of this research is to produce quantitative data, a large sample of tracks and artists from France and Belgium were selected: 136 tracks (126 from France and 10 Belgium), which are all available online (mostly on YouTube and Dailymotion), from 114 different rappers for a total of 68,024 words analysed. Since the research presented in this article is part of a wider research looking at the determinants of NSL in French rap, the corpus was divided into four main sections with all the tracks and artists chosen to fit into them. The first section investigates diachronic determinants from two perspectives: different generations of rappers from the Ile-de-France region (1990/1991, 2001 and 2011) and one artist throughout his career (Akhenaton in 1991, 2001 and 2011). The second section looks at diatopic determinants. Three ethnic origins are compared (rappers of French, Algerian and Senegalese origin), together with three cities (Marseille, Paris and Brussels) and three departments (Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-Saint-Denis and Val-de-Marne). The third section focuses on gender determinants, with a comparison of male versus female rappers. Finally, the fourth section examines the impact of diaphasic determinants, analysing three rap genres (*jazz/poetic*, *ego trip* and *knowledge* rap). The full description of the selection process for each subsection of the corpus would be too lengthy and beyond the scope of this article.

Several authors have written about the linguistics of French (and francophone) rap, but we will only review quantitative analyses of language in the genre. First, Skye Paine (2012) investigated the use of *français* (standard French), *langue du bled* (defined as “language of the home country” of the artist, i.e. foreign borrowings other than English), *argot* (French slang) and *slang* (defined as English borrowings) in a corpus of 72 tracks from two Parisian bands (Suprême NTM and Afro Jazz) and two Marseille bands (Freeman and Fonky Family) from 1997 to 1999 (Paine 2012: 57). His conclusion was that only 4% of his corpus was non standard (i.e. *langage du bled*, *argot* and *slang*) and that English borrowings were very common, making up 26% of all non-standard uses (Paine 2012: 62).

Next, Samira Hassa (2010) studied the use of Arabic, English and *verlan* in context to define their functions in French rap. She analysed a corpus of four albums (57 tracks) by rappers who were nominated for the 2003 *Victoires de la Musique*.

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Hassa (2010: 59) remarks that *verlan* is not equally used in all regions of France, that it is most common around Paris, and that it is generally used when referring to stories of the *banlieue*, unemployment, delinquency or racial tensions. Hassa (2010: 49) also argues that, despite the fact that most French pupils learn British English at school, it is American English, and more precisely African American English, that is used in rap music. Because of this influence of the United States, French rap lyrics typically contain many references to Hollywood, Harlem (e.g. French rapper Harlem) or American TV shows (Hassa 2010: 56). Similarly to *verlan*, the use of English is not random and tends to be restricted to certain concepts, such as violence, power and the degradation of women, with words such as *bitch, fuck, fucking, kicker, shooter, dead or gang* (Hassa 2010: 57).

Hassa (2010: 49) adds that most of the time, the Arabic used in French rap comes from Moroccan, Tunisian or Algerian dialectal varieties (Hassa 2010: 49). She also observed that all the rappers from her corpus used at least some Arabic in their tracks, which is rarely the case with other musical genres like pop music (Hassa 2010: 50). She goes on to say that it is not easy to find differences in the use of Arabic between artists from Marseille and Paris (Hassa 2010: 51). Some artists from Marseille use many Arabic borrowings while others from Paris do not and vice versa. Arabic is used the most when talking about Islam and Muslim cultural practices, with common words being *hallal, ibliss (mal/evil)* and *sheitane (diable/devil)* (Hassa 2010: 52).

Although actual quantitative studies of language in French rap are limited, other authors and researchers have mentioned quantitative linguistic data in their books and articles about rap in general without focusing on this topic only. For instance, according to Martin (2010: 97-99), French rappers do not generally speak that differently from the general population. Diam's, for example, who was the most famous female rapper in the early 2000s, uses a very varied vocabulary that is mostly characterised by standard and colloquial language. She also uses some abbreviations, many of them being everyday acronyms like SMS, MMS or MSN. However, Manuel Boucher (1998: 178), although in an earlier study, explains that French rappers use vulgar language in their lyrics too, sometimes in a ritualistic way, like in *ego trip* in which insulting other rappers in the industry is part of the game and constitutes one of the rituals of the genre. Nevertheless, Martin (2010: 98) argues that vulgar language is typically limited, giving the example of Diam's who uses only two or three occurrences per track on average.

## 2. Quantitative results and overview of the corpus

This section will present the quantitative results from the entire corpus together with more qualitative descriptions. These results are summarised in the following table:

Non-standard language	Number of words	% (of total word count)
<b>Corpus word count</b>	68024	100
<b>Total NSL</b>	4988	7.33
<b>Abbreviations</b>	613	0.9
<b>Slang</b>	776	1.14
<b>Colloquial words</b>	1860	2.73
<b>Foreign borrowings</b>	1404	2,06
<b>Verlan</b>	259	0.38
<b>Vulgar words</b>	453	0.66
<b>Combinations</b>	362	0.53

The first figure of importance is the total of 7.33% of NSL words in the whole corpus. This result shows that almost 93% of French rappers' vocabulary is standard and that they do not use as many NSL words as might have been expected, although this observation also needs to be qualified. Indeed, it means that, if we were to look at this number only and set aside variation, one out of every thirteen words in the corpus on average would be non-standard. In other words, there would be almost one NSL word in every sentence throughout the whole corpus.

However, this NSL is not necessarily cryptic. In reality, colloquial language is the most used category in the corpus. It amounts to 2.73% of the total word count, which represents 37.3% of all NSL words. This observation serves as a good reminder that the rappers do not use slang and *verlan* exclusively. A lot of their vocabulary belongs to everyday language, which they might emphasise slightly more than normal native speakers. Even in tracks that contain many slang words, the importance of colloquial words cannot be underestimated. The following extract from Tandem shows how prevalent these words can be in the corpus:

(1)

J'manque de protéines j'aime trop

**l'fric**

*I lack protein I like money*

*too much*

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A Auber c'est trop torride	<i>In Auber it's too passionate</i>
Car à tous moments tu peux	<i>Because at any moment</i>
t'retrouver <u>l'cul</u> sur l'gril	<i>your ass can end up on the grill</i>
(...)	(...)
D'nos jours avant <u>d'tremper</u> dans	<i>These days before messing up with</i>
quelque trafic que ce soit	<i>any kind of trafficking</i>
(...)	(...)
Les <u>mômes</u> qui <u>s'crament</u> trop tôt	<i>Kids get burnt too early</i>
On <u>a trop les crocs</u> le monde est	<i>We are too hungry the world is</i>
<u>stone</u> (Stone!!!)	<i>stoned (stoned!!!)</i>

(Tandem 2005, *C'est toujours pour ceux qui savent*: "Le monde est stone")

In this extract, all NSL words were underlined and the colloquial words were put in bold, a strategy used throughout this article to identify NSL words (underlined) and highlight specific NSL categories (underlined and bold). The extract exemplifies how, in many tracks, colloquial words represent the majority of NSL words used. This extract also gives insights into usual collocations and the types of words used. We can see that these words refer to money (e.g. *fric*: *argent/money*), sex (e.g. *cul*: *derrière/arse*), illegal business (e.g. *tremper*: *participer/participate*; *se cramer*: *se brûler/to get burnt*) and everyday words (e.g. *mômes*: *enfant/child*; *avoir les crocs*: *avoir faim/to be hungry*). These categories are already very representative of the most important uses of colloquial words in the corpus, but other major categories were found as well, such as body parts (e.g. *gueule*: *visage/face*), mockery (e.g. *glande*: *fainéant/lazybones*), family and relatives (e.g. *frangin*: *frère/brother*) or fundamental needs (e.g. *avoir la dalle*).

Contrary to colloquial words, vulgar words were much rarer in the corpus. They add up to only 0.7% of the corpus and 9.1% of all NSL words. This percentage is low despite many prejudices and myths surrounding vulgarity in French rap (see e.g. Pecqueux 2009: 41). Only one out of every 151 words is vulgar, making this category relatively rare. Nevertheless, French rappers can be vulgar at times. When they do, they tend to use derogatory and misogynistic terms when speaking to both men and women. Second, and this applies to the general population too, they enjoy adding words like *gros* (big or fat) or *sale* (dirty) before their insults to emphasise them. This is a tendency that is reflected throughout the corpus with collocations such as *sale bâtard* (dirty bastard), *sale conne* (dirty

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idiot), *sale môme* (dirty child), or *sale porc* (dirty pig). Just as for colloquialisms, some general categories of vulgar words can be drawn from the corpus: direct insults (e.g. *connard*: idiot), interjections (e.g. *bordel*: brothel), sexuality (e.g. *couilles*: *testicules*/testicles) and scatology (e.g. *chier*: *déféquer*/to crap).

Some of the typical categories of vulgar words from the corpus also contain English borrowings, such as *bitch*, *fuck*, *motherfucker* or *sucker*. This is to be expected, given the prevalence of foreign borrowings in the corpus. Foreign borrowings were the second most important category, with 2.06% of the corpus and 28.1% of all NSL words having been borrowed from another language. As illustrated by the previous examples, the chosen borrowings frequently relate to misogynistic insults and sexual references, but also to violence, business, crime or partying (Hassa 2010: 56-59). Naturally, one other very common use of English concerns the technical vocabulary specific to rap music, such as the words in the following extract from Akhenaton:

(2)	
J'suis las des guerres de classe, <b>mic</b> à	<i>I'm tired of class warfare, mike in the</i>
la main j'm'évade	<i>hand I'm escaping</i>
(...)	(...)
Emporte avec un <b>beat</b> physique et	<i>Take away with a physical beat and</i>
<b>stab</b> comme une dague	<i>stab like a dagger</i>
(...)	(...)
<b>Lyrics</b> denses! Démagogie, l'corps,	<i>Dense lyrics! Demagoguery, the body,</i>
ma bouche, sa tumeur	<i>my mouth, its tumor</i>

(Akhenaton 2001, *Sol invictus*: "Chaque jour")

Specific hip hop and rap music terminology like *mic*, *beat* or *lyrics* are very common in the corpus. Two main explanations can be put forward for the presence of these words. First, it can be argued that many of them do not have standard equivalents in French, so that the English ones are necessary. This may be true for some words like *flow* or *ego trip* but it is not always the case. *Lyrics* for instance could very well be replaced by *paroles*, and the same might be said, to a certain extent, for *beat* being replaced by *rythme*. Second, French rappers are simply heavily influenced by American rappers whom they try to imitate. Indeed, French rap may have developed its own approach to the genre, but American rap has been one of the main sources of inspiration for many French rappers, especially some of the earliest French rap bands like IAM.

Although English is widely used in the corpus (81.41% of all borrowings) and in French rap in general, it is certainly not the only foreign language that is

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quantitatively significant. Arabic also has a central role (12.25% of all borrowings). Perhaps more so than English, Arabic can be useful when investigating the major determinants of language use in rap music because its presence, just like *verlan*, varies greatly from one subsection of the corpus to the next (from 0% to 36.36% of the borrowings). The presence of Arabic in rap music and hip hop is predictable because Islam has been present in the hip hop movement since its foundation, going back as far as Afrika Bambaata and his connection with the Nation of Islam (Alim 2006: 25). Given this presence of Islam but also of rappers of North-African origin, it is not surprising for a researcher like Hassa (2010: 50-56) to report that all rap artists in her study used Arabic. Although Arabic is well represented in Hassa's corpus, the same cannot be said about this research. Numerous artists did not, in fact, use any Arabic at all, as only 46 out of 136 tracks contained Arabic borrowings.

Contrary to their frequent use of foreign borrowings, French rappers do not use as much slang. Only 1.14% of the corpus and 15.5% of all NSL words belonged to this category. Once more, this puts the importance of slang into perspective, especially as many of these slang words can in fact be found in dictionaries and/or could be described as being part of everyday French (e.g. *taffer*: *travailler*/to work; *taulard*: *prisonnier*/prisoner, *nan*: *non*/no; etc.). The easiest of these words in the corpus to understand are long-established slang words. Some of these words date as far back as the 17<sup>th</sup> century or sometimes earlier, such as *daron* (père/father), *taf* (travail/work), *taule* (prison), *oseille* (*argent*/money) or *tune* (*argent*/money) (Fattier 2003: 14; Goudaillier 1998: 22). The tendency to use these words is shared by most rappers in this analysis, as exemplified by this extract from Leck:

(3)

Si tu mens à ta **daronne**, sache que tu    *If you lie to your mum, know that you*  
mens à tout l'monde                            *lie to everyone*

(Leck in La Fouine 2011, *Capitale du crime vol.3: "Jalousie"*)

The type of slang illustrated by this extract is very common throughout the whole corpus. This could be expected because a lot of the long-established French slang has become everyday colloquial language. The word *taf*, for instance, has turned into a fairly common word. However, not all slang words are used so liberally by the general population, even long-established slang words. In the previous extract, for instance, *daronne* (*maman*/mum) is much less common than a word

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such as *flic*. This word is by no means limited to FCC or French rap, but it is not very common outside these spheres.

Then, it should still be acknowledged that quite a few of the slang words could not be found in conventional dictionaries. Such words most certainly contribute to problems of understanding, as they are recent and fairly cryptic for the non-initiated and help propagate the myth that French rap contains large amounts of slang. A few notable examples are *bollos* (*faible/weakling*), *calculer* (*comprendre/to understand*), *cambuter* (*échanger/to exchange*), *charbonner* (*trimer/to work hard for little money*), *kenner* (*faire l'amour/to have sexual intercourse*) or *fomblard* (*lâche/coward*), to name but a few. The next extract from the corpus illustrates this tendency well:

(4)		
J'perds le contrôle devant tes		<i>I'm losing control faced with your</i>
<b>cassosseries</b>		<i>delinquency</i>
Fresh c'est d'la frappe au point que		<i>Fresh it's good to the point where</i>
les <b>bollos</b> crient.		<i>weaklings scream</i>
(...)		(...)
75 c'est ici que les <b>gueush</b>		<i>75 this is here that (unknown)</i>
cohabitent avec les riches.		<i>live together with rich people</i>

(Still Fresh 2011, *Mes rêves*: "J'perds le contrôle")

This extract is revealing, not only because it contains three uncommon and cryptic slang words, but also because it exemplifies one of the biggest problems faced by linguists when analysing rap tracks: dealing with hard-to-understand words. The meaning of the third word, *gueush*, is unknown. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to struggle to assign a meaning and etymology to some of the most recent and cryptic slang.

Fortunately, some of these cryptic words, although certainly not all, can be deciphered once researchers understand how they are formed. For example, many recent slang words contain non-standard suffixes (Goudaillier 1998: 17). For example, the word *fouleck* (*fou/crazy person*) appears four times in the corpus. It is a combination of *fou* and the suffix *-eck* (as well as an added *l* to ease the pronunciation). Other common examples that were found in the corpus are: *dalleux* (*affamé/hungry person*), *marronner* (*râler/to be upset*), *mythonner* (*mentir/to tell lies*) and *poto* (*ami/friend*). The suffixes from these examples are not necessarily non standard by themselves (unlike *-eck*), but their combination with words that do not normally accept such suffixes in standard French results in the creation of non-standard words.

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This subcategory of slang words, however, is less common in the corpus than another NSL category that can also be deconstructed: *verlan*. In fact, *verlan* was the least used category: 0.38% of the whole corpus and 5.2% of all NSL words. This is an unexpected result because some researchers such as Goudaillier (1998: 3) point out that a synonym of *FCC* is *verlan*. If *verlan* can be used to refer to the way youths from suburbs speak, then one would assume that it is used a lot in rap. This research on rap music contradicts this idea but it certainly does not mean that its interest is limited. *Verlan* is also the category with the widest variation from one subsection of the corpus to another (from 0% to 3.06%), making it an important area of study to investigate what determines the use of NSL. Furthermore, *verlan* words can also be abbreviated, which creates monosyllabic words that have little to no connection to their original spelling and pronunciation.

This tendency to abbreviate *verlan* words extends to all types of words in the corpus. The quantitative data shows that 0.9% of the words from the corpus are abbreviated, which represents 12.3% of all NSL words. The presence of abbreviations was predictable, since most native speakers tend to use abbreviations too. The main problem caused by abbreviations is that they can easily be combined with other categories. When such combinations affect vulgar or colloquial words, they rarely make understanding difficult but when they are associated with slang, *verlan* or foreign borrowings, they often turn this straightforward category into the most problematic. Finding the etymology of abbreviated words can be very challenging and causes researchers to jump to early conclusions based on an incorrect understanding. This tendency to combine abbreviations with other categories is reflected in the 0.53% of the corpus that belongs to combinations between categories. Although other combinations are represented in this figure, abbreviations were the most common combined category.

Within the category of abbreviations, the most common practice in the corpus is the use of truncations. Truncations are words that have been partly suppressed (El-Kolli 2013: 127). The suppression can either affect the beginning of the word in the case of aphereses, such as *blème* (*problème*/problem), *teille* (*bouteille*/bottle) or *Tiag* (*Santiago*), or the end of the word in the case of apocopes, such as *biz* (business), *mat'* (*matin*/morning) or *périp* (*périphérique*/peripheral). In the corpus, apocopes are much more frequent than

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apherases. Not only are apherases rare, they can sometimes also be attributed to abbreviated *verlan*, as in the next extract from A6mil:

(5)

Le mensonge a hypnotisé ma zik pour Lying has hypnotised my music to  
mieux l'enfiler better mess with it

(A6mil, 2011, *L'agonie du silence*, "Un bic et deux feuilles")

What is the etymology of *zik* in this track? It can be the apocope of the *verlan zik-mu* (music) or the apherases of *musique* (music). As a result, it becomes difficult to count the cases of true apherases in the corpus and this has also an impact on the number of *verlan* words counted. In this case, I opted for the apherasis of *musique*, because the *verlan* word *sique-mu* is not nearly as common as *zik*.

### 3. Conclusions

This article focused on the global results from an analysis of the use of NSL in a corpus of selected francophone rap tracks. The general conclusion from this analysis is that, on average, French rappers do not deviate that much from standard French, since 93% of their vocabulary is perfectly standard. This finding confirms Martin's (2010: 97-99) and Paine's (2012: 52) conclusions, but on a wider scale, as Martin's observations came mostly from his analysis of Diam's' 2006 album *Dans ma bulle* and Paine's study was based on a smaller and less diversified corpus. The fact that colloquial language proves to be the most widely used NSL category in the corpus, which confirms again what Martin (2010: 97-99) postulated, shows that even their NSL vocabulary is not oversaturated with cryptic language. In fact, all the cryptic NSL categories combined (slang, *verlan*, and combinations) account for around only 2% of the corpus, i.e. one out of every fifty words. This estimate should even be revised downwards because many slang or *verlan* words have lost their cryptic nature and become everyday occurrences. This research also shows that foreign borrowings are the second most common NSL category in the corpus and originate principally from English, as Paine (2012: 62) asserted, and to a lesser extent Arabic. Consequently, the average French rapper's vocabulary is in reality constituted of predominantly standard words punctuated with mostly colloquialisms and English borrowings.

These findings fill in a gap in the literature, as such a broad and detailed lexicographic analysis was lacking, and come to counter in a quantitative manner many of the myths surrounding language in French rap. For example, this

research gives a direct answer to the misconception that French rappers make frequent use of vulgarities, a stereotype that both Pecqueux (2009, p.41) and Martin (2010a, p.98) had tried to demystify before me, but without relying on such a wide a corpus. Future researchers who will attempt to address similar issues will be able to draw on these quantitative results, which clearly show that vulgarities are actually among the lowest NSL categories used by French rappers. This study can also inspire future research, especially with regards to English and colloquial words in French rap. As these two forms of NSL are the most prevalent, it would be interesting to carry out more detailed analyses that focus on these types of words exclusively to find out precisely what words are used in what contexts. Such studies could even rely on this corpus and re-analyse it with this goal in mind.

Finally, it must be noted that most of these results are artificial to some degree because they do not represent anyone in particular. In reality, some differences between artists can be observed, which can sometimes be marked. This is where the strength of this research lies: in its ability to pave the way for an extensive study of the variation of NSL in French rap and the determinants of this variation. Indeed, these quantitative results are based on a corpus that was specifically designed to study the impact of time, spatial and ethnic origins, gender and genre on the use of NSL language. These results will be presented in upcoming articles.

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