

## Form, Meaning and Function of Argot in French Rap Song: Sociolinguistics Study

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**Abstract**-Music is one of the way to express emotions, opinions, and also criticism. The lyrics helps us to communicate, and spread its story. Argot in rap song is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that spreads in all languages, including French. The author conducted this study with the aim of knowing the formation of argot used, the meaning behind, and what correlation it has with situation in Marseille. The writer uses descriptive analysis method and theories that support this research are the theory of sociolinguistics and the process of forming argot Calvet (1994), as well as the theory of meaning Baylon and Mignot (1995). The conclusion contains apocope, apheresis, suffixation, and metonymy. The most uses type of formation is metonym. Metonym can deliver a figurative meaning to achieve dramatic effect, but still maintain its secretive nature. Argot has a relation with how singer express their situation and condition within their lyrics.

**Keywords:** Crime; Rap; The use of Argot

### I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a form of social behavior that used by humans. Humans are social objects, so language can be a media to observe human interaction. Difference status or social groups, differences in educational background, economic level, and also differences in the place of birth of particular individual will affect the speech of that individual. Even with the level of familiarity will affect someone's speech, a teenager will speak with different word choices when talking with their parents or when talking with their peers. These are manifestations of language in observable social matrices. This form of speech is a manifestation of the differences in socio-cultural, economic, background, and so on.

An individual has his own way of speaking, referred to as idiolect. This individual can also use regional dialects based on the

region or country where he came from, or use the social dialect that he uses in certain social groups called sociolect. Idiolect, dialect, and sosiolect are a language variations that can be observed from someone's speech. In this study, the language variety that will be observed is sociolect. Sociolect is generally defined as a variation of speech in a community, a socio-cultural group, or a group based on age (Marie-Louise. Moreau, 1997). One of the form of sosiolect is professional jargon, also known as argot. Argot himself belongs to the sociolect category that was created specifically by certain social groups, there is some type of argot called criminal argot, argot for children, army for argot, and so on. Thus, argot indirectly becomes a person's identity regarding his social background. (Dubois, 2002) defines argot as follows:

*L'argot est un dialecte social réduit au lexique, de caractère parasite (...), employé*

*dans une couche déterminée de la société qui se veut en opposition avec les autres ; il a pour but de n'être compris que des initiés ou de marquer l'appartenance à un certain groupe. L'argot proprement dit a d'abord été celui des malfaiteurs. Il s'est développé d'autres argots dans certaines professions ou dans certains groupes (écoles, armée, prisonniers).*

'Argot is a social dialect that is reduced to a lexicon, has a parasitic character (...), is used in certain layers of society who want to be different from others; argot has a purpose so that it can only be understood by insiders or to mark membership in certain groups. Argot was first used by criminals. Argot also developed in several professions or groups (educated, military, prison prisoners).'

Calvet (1994) describes that the history of argot is only written in writing, although argot is an oral production, and therefore the majority of argot dictionaries in France use corpus literacy. Argot was known in the 15th century because of the cases of *coquillards*, namely the trial of medieval criminals or bandits, it was the case that gave the first source of usage of argot. Based on the historical description above, Calvet then defines argot as *le mot désigne alors une langue secrète, à fonction cryptique, la langue professionnelle des truands en quelque sorte* 'the word argot is then intended as a secret language that has a password function, the language of thugs in several ways' (Calvet, 1994).

Nowadays argot is commonly used by young people and is commonly found in young people's social media, in the form of a tweet on Twitter to musical artwork. The music genre is very diverse, both traditional and modern music, rock music to pop music. Rap music is one of the musical genres that is the result of young people's creativity from the suburbs of the United States, so rap songs are also known as the music of the suburban area. American rap comes from the history of African communities living in America and experiencing a period of slavery, human trafficking, and racism. The lyrics of the American rap song are centered on these themes.

With different social conditions the theme of rap songs in France is different from the theme of American rap song lyrics. (Hammou, 2015) mentions that the beginning of French rap was because of some topic that wants to be voiced, such as about cultural differences between the culture of the rapper's

parents and the culture in which the rapper was raised. Immigrants or French transmigrants do not experience slavery but what happens is inequality. Inequality due to different economic levels so that they have to work as laborers to improve family economy, therefore the lyrics that are presented are about the social conditions and the socio-cultural gap between the second generation of immigrant or transmigrants parents in France. The history of the rap music originated from the genre of reggae and blues, so it created hip-hop.

The data used in this study is the lyrics from rapper Julian Marie with the stage name Jul. He was born and raised at Saint Jean du Désert 13005 or what he called as Saint Jean de la Puente in Marseille, on January 14, 1990. Jul's parents came from Corsica who migrated to Marseille. Jul's career began as a pool cleaner with his father, but Jul felt dissatisfied with the job and started making rap songs. Then he his career as a rap singer began by uploading his rap songs to the Skyblog site. In the period 1 February 2019 - 7 February 2019 Jul dominates the French artist charts in the popular Youtube website (source: charts.youtube.com). The data used in this study is a collection of Jul's rap lyrics on the album *Dans Ma Paranoïa* (2014), *Je Trouve Pas Le Sommeil* (2014), and *Je Tourne En Rond* (2015) quoted from the page www.parolesmania.com and www.genius.com. The objects in this study are words that contain the word argot.

There are several studies that analyse argot, the first research is entitled (1) *Aperçu Général de l'Argot en Français* 'General Overview of Argot in French' by (Lan, 2006). This study discusses argot in general in French and Vietnamese. The similarity between first study and this study is both discussed the representation and socio-culture in rap songs, but the first study did not discuss argot formation process. The second study entitled (2) *L'influence de l'argot sur la langue commune et les procédés de sa formation en français contemporain* 'The influence of argot on the common language and the processes of its formation in contemporary French' by (Červenková, 2001). The second study and this study both discussed argot and its formation process, but the second study did not specifically discuss argot contained in rap songs only argot in common language.

Based on the previous research above, argot research is widely studied in general but does not analyze argot from the world of rap

music. Rap is a place for young people to voice their criticisms and aspirations through music, of course there are many argot words that are not commonly understood by ordinary people. In addition to the formation process of argot and the meaning of argot, the function of argot in rap music is the domain that needs to be studied. The last theory that is still relevant to the argot formation process, is Calvet's theory from 1994 which is still a reference for researchers on argot. But the process of argot formation as time went on will increased, of course the argot used in the 19th century would not be the same as argot used by young people today, especially in the realm of rap songs. Therefore, this study aims to find out argot's forms, and meaning behind argot words and to find out the function of using argot in French rap song.

## II. METHODS

This study is using a descriptive qualitative method with sociolinguistic studies about the lyrics of rap songs in French. The method used to provide the data in this study is the method of *simak* (observe) this method used to obtain data by listening to the data, can be oral or written (Mahsun, 2005). The technique to obtain the data is by see or listen without having a contact with the source or in this matter by not having contact with the rapper personally, that is, if the researcher only acts as an observer of the use of language by his informants. Furthermore, the technique records to complete the provision of data.

Conducted by observation and note-taking technique, the researcher observes the research subject with the procedure (1) reads the song lyrics, (2) chooses the song lyrics that refer to Marseille or Saint Jean de La Puente, (3) gives a sign on the sentence contains the word argot, (4) records the sentences and words marked in the data sheet, (5) classifies the words argot according to the album and title. Furthermore, the implementation of the research follows the stages of collection, sorting, classification, and analysis. This study uses data in the form of song lyrics so that it falls into the category of 'written data'. The song lyrics used are rap lyrics from Jul, with the research object in the form of the word argot. The researcher collects data from online ("www.Genius.com," n.d.).

The *agih* (distribution) method is used to help analyze the field of morphology or the form of argot in this research. The argot words is formed with a varied process. In contrast to

the *padan* (match) referential method whose determinants are outside the language, the determinant of the *agih* (distribution) method is actually part of the language in question itself (Sudaryanto, 2015). The data collected in this study includes the process of decapitation (apocope and apheresis), suffixation, and verlan.

To present the results of analysis data of this study, it will be divided into two stages: **argot formation analysis** and **argot function analysis**.

In the argot formation analysis the steps used are (a) analysis of argot formation process, (b) lyric context, and (c) meaning analysis. Each of the argot formation analysis data will help researchers to understand the argot in the rap lyrics by Jul and help the reader to understand the data that researcher presents. The argot obtained is then complemented by the context of that song lyrics to provide a better understanding, and the final step is to analyze the meaning behind the argot.

In the argot function analysis the steps used are (a) grouping or classify vocabulary, (b) meaning analysis, and (c) the context of the situation. The argot data produced in the first step are then grouped according to the dominant themes present (the argot related to crime or related to the marginalization of immigrants, etc.). Based on that group data or themes, the researcher then presents the analysis results of the meaning and context correlation with the argot to the social reality of the song's author.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Jul is rapper *marseillais*, *marseillais* means people from Marseille. Aix-en-Provence Marseille or Marseille as the capital city of PACA has the largest population of other cities, which has 1.830 million citizen. Marseille has the largest port in France and this makes Marseille a city that is easier than any other city for immigrants or transmigrants to come to. Over time the flow of immigrants and transmigrants who occupied the city of Marseille became the starting point for the rise of criminal cases in Marseille. (Ager, 1999) stated that *the immigration issue rapidly becomes a way of affirming French Identity, is racialized, becomes a religious issue, an economic one, and is then criminalized*.

Le 5ème arrondissement or district 5 is one of 16 districts in Marseille and is Jul childhood area. If observed based on statistics

carried out by the French Ministry of Economy and Finance under the name of the *Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques* or INSEE in 2015, it can be seen that Marseille is one of the cities that has a high criminal rating. Paris also was one of the cities that compete with Marseille, but the types of criminals are different between the two. Paris as a tourism city attracts the most tourists, so the type of criminal activity that was very high such as pickpocketing.

All the data is classified into four argot formation processes. The formation process includes (1) apocope, (2) aferesis, (3) suffixation, and (4) metonymy. The process is obtained based on the data analyzed, the process of forming argot is very diverse because its nature as a secret language.

The analysis is divided into (a) analysis of argot formation process with changes in

word form (apocope, aferesis, and suffixation) and (b) analysis of argot formation process with changes in meaning (metonymy). In each formation process (form analysis and meaning analysis) begins with the explanation of the song context, analysis of the argot forming process, and analysis of argot's meaning.

### Analysis of Argot Formation Process with Changes in Word Form

In the argot formation process with changes in word form, the changes that occur are changes that transform the initial form of a word into a new word that is not in the dictionary. This process includes: a. apocope and aferesis, and b. suffixation.

#### Apocope

Apocope is process of decapitating the final syllable and leaving the initial syllable.

Table 1  
Pét

<i>J'(je)</i>	<i>perds</i>	<i>des</i>	<i>neurones</i>	<i>Quand</i>
I	lost	ø	nerves	When
PP.1.s	V Present	ATT	N.f.pl.	Conj.
<i>j'(je)</i>	<i>allume</i>	<i>mon</i>	<i>pét</i>	
I	burn	mine	rolled marijuana	
PP.1.s	V Present	Aj. Pos.	N.m.s	

'I lost my mind when I burn my marijuana'.

#### The Song Context

In this song, Jul tells that he feels that he is always spinning in the same and endless circle, making his head dizzy and by smoke marijuana he can forget his thoughts, his sadness and his difficulties. Jul also told about a couple of two-faced friends, who disappeared when he needed them. His other friend was in prison, a friend whose he thought was loyal to him but ended up in jail for committing a criminal act and finally Jul left alone again.

#### Analysis of Argot Formation Process

Pétard go through decapitation at the last syllable. Pétard is one of variation of the word péter which means fart. The word péter itself can be interpreted in various types depending on the context and suffix used. Pétard is formed from two syllables pet + ard, the syllable -ard is the suffix for argot that has a pejorative nature or a decrease in meaning to become negative. The last syllable -ard can be used or not, but the use of the word pét or péter without context will be interpreted as farting.

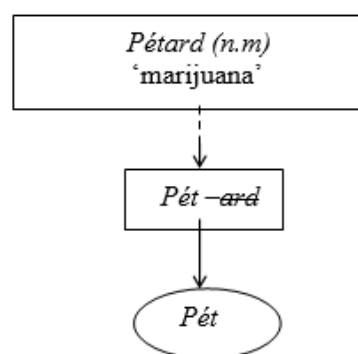


Figure 1

Schematic Formation of Pét

#### Analysis of Argot's Meanings

In Larousse Dictionary the word *pétard* define as follows:

*Pétard, n.m. petite pièce d'artifice produisant un bruit sec et fort (signaux, réjouissances); revolver; grosse cigarette de marijuana. 'Pétard, n.m : small pieces of fireworks that produce sound so quickly and loudly (signal, rejoice); gun ; large cannabis cigarettes'.*

The meaning described in the French dictionary is divided into fireworks, pistols, or marijuana. The word *pétard* in the data is the word that has gone through the apocope process to *pét* and the *allumer* verb 'lit' gives the context that *pét* refers to the rolled marijuana that is being burned or smoked. Furthermore the next verse can provide a clearer context for determining which *pétard* is intended by Jul.

*J'tourne en rond j'ai mal à la tête*

'I feel spinning and headaches'.

From the verse listed after the data above, Jul felt spinning and dizzy and then Jul uses 'something' to get rid of the thoughts that burden him. 'Something' used to relieve dizziness is marijuana. Marijuana contains THC (*Tetrahydrocannabinol*) a substance that gives euphoria or excessive pleasure, so based on the context and effects of marijuana the word *pétard* used by Jul to forget about his difficulties is marijuana.

**Table 2**  
Other data from apocope

No	Data
1	<i>J'perds des neurones quand j'allume mon pét'</i>
2	<i>Parc'qu'ils ont le nez dans la coco, coco, coco</i>
3	<i>C'est pour ceux qui roulent des pét', Même si dans la malle y'a trente kils'</i>
4	<i>Ça parle de kill', de Kalash, ça s'les vide au Dallas</i>
5	<i>Y'a du shit, des armes, du biff, des armes, c'est l'ghetto</i>
6	<i>Qui galèrent tout les jours au charbon, un cambu, un malheur</i>

*Apheresis* initial syllable and leaving the end syllable of the word.  
Apheresis is the process of decapitating

**Table 3**  
*Tasses*

<i>Les</i>	<i>tasses</i>	<i>qui</i>	<i>parlent</i>	<i>pour</i>
Ø	prostitute	that	speak	for
AT	N.f.pl.	PR	V Present	Prep.
<i>Rien</i>	<i>qui</i>	<i>flèchent</i>		
Nothing	that	blinking		
PI	PR	V Present		

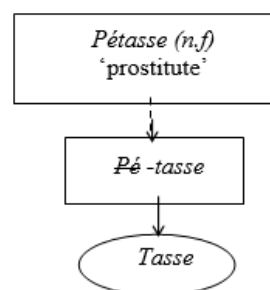
'Prostitutes who speak nonsense, who speak flirtatiously'.

*The Song Context*

The context in the verse above is when Jul was drinking alcohol with his friends and a woman was in the passenger seat of a car and flirtatiously wanted Jul to lift her skirt. Jul hated people who tested him like that, for Jul she was just a prostitute who only talked nonsense and flirting to him.

*Analysis of Argot Formation Process*

*Pétasse* is one of the argot words that starts from the word *péter* 'to fart'. The word *péter* first going through apocope process by decapitating the suffix -er and then adding a pejorative suffix -asse. Decapitation that occurs in the word *pétasse* has a negative connotation because of the suffix -asse that added.



**Figure 2**

Formation of Tasse

*Analysis of Argot's Meanings*

The word *pétasse* starts from the verb *péter* which means to fart if its without any context. In addition to the verb *péter*, there are also words *péteux* or *péteuse* a feminine noun and adjective noun which mean women who are ashamed of what they do. It can be

concluded that the meaning conveyed by the word *pétasse* refers to an embarrassing woman or a woman who sells herself. But now the word *pétasse* is no longer included in the category of argot because it is already known

by many people and already acknowledge in the dictionary. Thus the word *pétasse* once again undergoes the process of forming argot into *tasse* only.

**Table 3**  
Other data from apheresis

No	Data
1	<i>Faut assumer faut pas faire la pute quand un blem</i>
2	<i>Les 'tasses qui parlent pour rien qui flèchent</i>

*Affixation of suffix*

Affixation of suffix is the process of

forming argot with adding a suffix that are argotic, diminutive, or pejorative.

**Table 4**  
*Placo*

<i>J'(je)</i>	<i>veux</i>	<i>pas</i>	<i>finir</i>	<i>au</i>
I	want	no	finish	at
PP.1.s	V Present	Adv. Neg.	V Inf.	Prep.
<i>Chantier</i>	<i>taffer</i>	<i>dans</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>placo</i>
construction site	working	in	ø	prison
V Inf.	V Inf.	Prep.	AT	N.m.s.

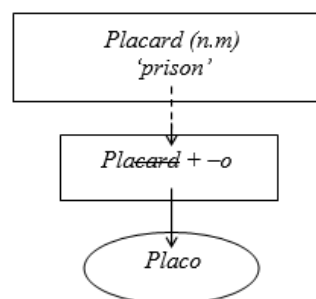
'I don't want to end up working at a construction site, working in a prison'.

*The Song Context*

The context of the verse above is when Jul's friends will do a robbery and arrange to meet at the Jarret river. Then they confronted with police officers and got caught, the police shaved their hair bald (the legal requirement if they being detained). Jul tell about his friend who hid the SIM Card he used so it could not be seen by the police. Jul did not want to end up in prison working to repair a wall like in a construction site, he mustered up courage and not involved with them anymore. Jul heard that the police had targeted them, Jul's friends.

*Analysis of Argot Formation Process*

Affixation of suffix occurs in the word *placard* (n.m) which has the meaning of prison, this word is a popular word which was previously argot but then get acknowledge in the dictionary. Words that are already known to many or popular people are no longer included in the argot category. The word *placard* itself is a metaphor of cabinets, prisons and cabinets have similar characteristics such as narrow and confined in the dark. The word *placard* consists of two syllables *pla + card*, the suffix *-o* occurs after going through the apocope process first.



**Figure 3**

Formation of Placo

*Analysis of Argot's Meaning*

*Placard* in Larousse Dictionary define as cabinet, *face d'armoire, composée d'un bâti dormant et d'une ou deux portes, fermant une niche, une partie en retrait dans un mur, où l'on dispose des tablettes, des portemanteaux* 'a cabinet consisting of a frame and one or two doors, covering a niche, partially hidden in a wall, where we keep our coat'. But the word *placard* has been recognized as a popular word for prison.

There is a context and correlation between police and *placo* in the next verse:

*J'ai entendu que les civils ils veulent ta peau*

'I heard that the police wanting you'.

Jul didn't want to end up in jail and he had heard that the police were eyeing his

friend. There is a word *placo* which is then of the police in disguise. followed by *les civils* which is the metonymy

**Table 5**  
Other data from affixation of suffix

No	Data
1	<i>Coup du foulard, fais-moi l'centre que j'puisse amortir</i>
2	<i>J'trouve pas le sommeil, direct j'roule un bédo</i>
3	<i>Braquo, cambu ou agression, moi perso j'fais plus rien, au studio j'taffe l'art du son</i>
4	<i>Trop se sont fait péter, pour eux j'allume mon pétou</i>
5	<i>Ils ne parlent pas en face, pour moi c'est qu'des pétasses</i>
6	<i>Y'a qu'des taulards, dans ma cité</i>

**Metonymy**

Metonymy uses the closeness and association between each words. One example of the argot from metonymy process is the word *Bleu* which means blue, but its use in argot is referred to as *le policier* 'police'. This is caused by the similarity between the colors of police cars and the dominant color in police siren lights are blue (Goudailler, 2001).

The *mental spaces theory* and its relation to metonymy are about normal reference called *triggers*, and *target* which is a targeted reference by the speakers related contexts and are found in the reality of speakers (Susanto, 2009). *Triggers* and *targets* are connected to each other by the conceptual associations that exist in the human mind, based on their life experiences, cultures and other experiences

**Table 6**  
*Kalash*

<i>T' (Tu)</i>	<i>imagines</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ton</i>	<i>frère</i>
<b>You</b>	imagine	if	your	brothers
<b>PP.2.s</b>	V Present	Conj.	Adj. Pos.	N.m.s
<i>Meurt</i>	<i>tuer</i>	<i>d' (de)</i>	<i>une</i>	<i>kalash</i>
<b>Dies</b>	kill	by	a	firearms
<b>V Present</b>	V Inf.	Prep.	ATT.	N.f.s

'You imagine if your brother was killed with a gun'.

Based on data 4 Jul using the word

*kalash* which is juxtaposed with the current verb *meurt* 'dies' and the infinitive verb *tuer* 'kill' so it can be concluded that *kalash* is an object that can be used to kill someone.

**Table 7**  
*Kalash*

<i>T' (Tu)</i>	<i>sais</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>Russes</i>	<i>ont</i>
<b>You</b>	know	Ø	Russian	Ø
<b>PP.2.s</b>	V Present	AT.	N.m.pl.	V Bantu + Kini.
<i>Found</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>kalash</i>		
<b>V Lampau.</b>	Ø	firearms		
	AT.	N.f.s.		

'You know it's Russian who created kalash'.

On the data 5 Jul provides information about the *kalash* maker that was previously mentioned can be used to kill someone. The

*kalash* maker is Russian. Based on this information someone from Russia created *Kalash*, he was named Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov, a Russian general, military engineer, writer, and weapons designer. One of



the weapons that Kalashnikov create was the AK-47 automatic, this weapon was globally

known. The table for metonymy processes of *kalash* are as follows:

**Table 8**  
Metonymy Analysis of ‘Kalash’

Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov + Weapons designer + AK-74 automatic weapon + Fire gun	THE TYPE OF METONYMY PROCESS	
	The creator represents the work	
	TRIGGER	TARGET
	Kalash	Firearms

Based on the table above, the trigger word '*kalash*' used as a replacement for the target '*firearms*', this relation occurs because of association between the inventor's name and the popular firearms he made. The association

was strengthened by the use of verbs *meurt* 'dies' and infinitive verbs *tuer* 'kill' and information about the inventors came from Russia. The word *kalash* is common word used by rap singers as well as Jul.

**Table 9**  
Other data from metonymy

No	Data
1	<i>J'fais pas le Vito, j'vis dans c'monde de mythos</i>
2	<i>T'sais les Russes ont inventé la Kalash'</i> <i>T'imagines si ton frère meurt tuer d'une kalash</i>
3	<i>Marseille dans les tieks c'est devenu Far Cry</i>
4	<i>Partout y'a des Kalash', sert à rien d'faire le Hercule</i>
5	<i>Les petits jouent les Van Damme</i>
6	<i>Anti-Pouki, couteau ou batte s'tu fais le Rocky</i>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusions obtained that there are two main process in making argot: (1) changes in word form through apocope, apheresis, and suffixation, to change the initial word form and create argot, and (2) change in meaning through metonymy, to create the argot which won't be understandable if the listeners do not have an understanding of the association from the argot used with the rapper's environment and situation. There are another function obtained from this analysis besides the function of confidentiality. The secrecy of argot has been present since its first use until now, so naturally in some choices the argot has this secret feature. Listeners will not be able to directly grasp the meaning of the data if they do not know the background or context about this rapper. Argot also has the identity function, this function is present because of the widespread development of argot, its use is not only for criminals anymore, so there are various groups that have their own argot made up. The identities present in the argot include the following: a. Regional identity, it can be seen from several words argot that borrow words

from other languages. The borrowed word is generally a slang word from the origin of the region, so it belongs to the argot type. Examples of these words are *kalash* which is called the language of Marseillais or the people of Marseille. b. Identity as a rapper, in the American rap world there are lots of slang words that are only used in rap world or will differ in meaning if used in the context of rap lyrics, such as *kill* and *kils* in the apocope data. Likewise with the world of French rap, many words are commonly used by rap singers. This function is the evidence of function of argot has widespread.

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