

MULTICULTURAL LONDON ENGLISH / MULTICULTURAL PARIS FRENCH

ACTIVITY FILE: LES BOUG'ZEERS

Speaker	French text : les « boug'zeers »
	Sound file
ODL:	boug'zeers !
CLO:	les boug'zeers (.) les boug'zeers voilà .
CLO:	les boug'zeers .
ODL:	boug'zeers .
ENQ:	c'est quoi ça ?
AIM:	ça c'est genre (.) en fait c'est +/.
ENQ:	ah !
ODL:	la plupart du temps .
AIM:	c'est genre ceux avec les piercings et tout .
ODL :	des casquettes (..) les sacoches montées .
AIM:	les casquettes (.) genre les petites sacoches comme ça et tout .
ODL :	qui sont (..) qui sont en groupe et tout .
AIM:	énervés (..) toujours en bande et tout .
CLO:	qui font du bruit dans le train (..) ouais c'est ça .
ENQ :	ah ouais .
ODL:	et qui rackettent [= rires] .
AIM:	ouais (.) grave !
	(Secova and Gardner-Chloros, 2012)

The example in the box above is a recording made with young people in Paris. ODL, CLO and AIM are talking to the researcher (ENQ: enquêteur) about the names given to different groups of young people in their neighbourhood. The speech is informal and uses expressions commonly used by teenagers in Paris.

Exploring the text

In pairs or a small group, read the text. What does it tell us about the “boug'zeers”? What do they wear? How do they look? How do they behave in public?

Identify unfamiliar words. How much can you guess from the context in which they are used?

Carrying out your own research

Search online for unfamiliar words and expressions and their meaning. How much can you find out about the context in which they are used?

The importance of research and understanding slang: how else would you know, when visiting France and meeting young people your own age, whether you are being teased or insulted?

Cross-linguistic comparisons

There are many different ways of translating a text. Translating informal language and slang is notoriously difficult as the words used can have very different connotations. For example a close equivalent to a commonly used word in one language, may be considered very rude in another.

In the text above, *genre* is used as a discourse marker*; *et tout* is an example of an extender**. Can you think of English equivalents that you would use in this context?

Drama and writing

- 1) In a group discuss some of the different ways in which young people are described in your neighbourhood. Choose a group. Devise and record a short drama/dialogue in French using informal language in which you are explaining to a visitor what these people look like and how they behave.
- 1) Write an entry for an encyclopaedia of teenage slang in formal French, beginning *les boug'zeers sont des.....*

*Discourse markers: "Discourse markers are words and phrases used in speaking and writing to 'signpost' discourse. Discourse markers do this by showing turns, joining ideas together, showing attitude, and generally controlling communication." (British Council, BBC)
<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/discourse-markers>

**Extenders: "These are phrases like *and stuff*, *and things*, *or something* or *and all that*. They are termed 'general extenders' because they often indicate that the previous word is part of a set, so they extend the meaning of that word without having to specify all the members of the set. For example, *and stuff* in *I used to wear punk ear rings and stuff* refers to a set of things that people wear when they want to look like a punk. Referring to a set is not necessarily their most important function though. Sometimes people use these little words to be purposely vague, to signal that they are not quite sure about something. However their most important function seems to be to create solidarity between speakers. By using a general extender the person speaking suggests that their interlocutor shares their knowledge or opinion, so there is no need to be explicit."
(from Spoken English Features*)

Resources and websites:

French slang http://www.languagerealm.com/french/frenchslang_m.php

*<http://linguistics.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/spoken-english-features>