

CAMEROON FRANCOPHONE ENGLISH: AN ATYPICAL EXAMPLE TO MOAG'S AND SCHNEIDER'S MODELS

Gilbert Tagne Safotso

Department of English, University of Maroua, Cameroon, P. O. Box 282 Dschang,
Cameroon

ABSTRACT: *The spread of English as the world lingua franca in the 20th century has led to the development of many autonomous non-native varieties of it. Those varieties first seen as deviations from Received Pronunciation, Standard British English, and General American have gradually developed their hallmarks, and now deserve serious consideration. Each non-native variety of English claims its autonomy, and indeed has some features which differentiate it from other new Englishes. Because they all have common parents-British English or American English-, certain tendencies have been observed in their evolution process. Kachru (1992), Moag (1992) and Schneider (2003, 2007 & 2009) proposed some of those models. But since in the Expanding Circle English continues to spread, some of the theories developed begin to be challenged. This paper aims to show that Cameroon Francophone English (CamFE), a New English variety, which is fast emerging is an atypical example to Moag's and Schneider's Models. With the growing interest in the learning of English in the 21st century, the paper proposes that new models of the evolution process of new Englishes be elaborated.*

KEYWORDS: CamFE, Models, Evolution, Development, Non-Native English

INTRODUCTION

In the postcolonial era, many non-native varieties of English have developed in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, or the Philippines. Examples such as Indian English (Bansal 1969 & 1978; Gargesh 2004), Singapore English (Lin 2004; Deterding 2007), Nigerian English (Tiffen 1974; Eka 1985; Jowitt 1991; Oluremi 2013), Ghanaian English (Sey 1973), Cameroon English (Simo Bobda 1994), etc. illustrate that reality. Those non-native Englishes, which some thirty years back, were seen as deviations from Received Pronunciation (RP), Standard British English, General American (Gen Am) are now accepted as autonomous varieties of English. The evolution process of those new Englishes, which is almost the same in the countries of the Outer Circle (Kachru 1988), has led to the formulation of some evolutionary theories. The following section looks at some theories on the evolution process of non-native varieties of English to better contrast their application with Cameroon Francophone English (CamFE).

The evolution of new Englishes and some related theories

Kachru (1992: 56) remarks that the non-native institutionalised varieties of English seem to have passed through several phases, which are not mutually exclusive. At the initial stage, there is a **non-recognition** of the local variety and conscious identification with the native speaker. In South Asian terms, Kachru says that it may be called the *brown sahib* attitude. A *brown sahib* is more English than the Englishman. He identifies with the *white sahib* in manners, speech, attitude, and feels that his brown or black colour is a burden. At this stage,

an ‘imitation model’ is elitist, powerful, and perhaps politically advantageous, since it identifies a person with the rulers. English at this stage is also associated with the colonizer, and may therefore be a symbol of anti-nationalism.

At the second stage, there is the extensive **diffusion of bilingualism in English**, which slowly leads to the development of varieties within a variety. The tendency is to claim that the other person is using the *Indianized*, *Ghanainized*, or *Lankanized* English. The local model is still low on the attitudinal scale, though it may be widely used in various functions.

Kachru’s model third stage starts when the non-native variety is **slowly accepted** as the norm, and the division between the linguistic norm and behaviour is reduced. He concludes that the final stage seems to be that of **recognition**. This recognition may manifest itself in two ways. First, in attitudinal terms, when one does not necessarily show a division between linguistic norm and language behaviour; and second, the teaching materials are *contextualized* in the native sociocultural milieu. So, Kachru’s theory of the development of non-native Englishes has the following four phases: (1) non-recognition of the local variety, (2) extensive diffusion of bilingualism in English, (3) slow acceptance of the non-native variety, and (4) its recognition. Moag (1992) and Schneider (2009) proposed other models, which are contrasted with Cameroon Francophone English in this study (see Kouega 2008; Safotso 2012 & 2015; Simo Bobda 2013; Atechi 2015 for the features of CamFE).

Moag (1992) calls the evolution processes that English undergoes in Outer and Expanding Circles (Kachru 1988), the life cycle of non-native Englishes. According to Moag, this life cycle of non-native Englishes has five constituents: transportation, indigenisation, expansion in use and function, institutionalisation, and restriction in use and function. **Transportation** means that the English language is brought into a new environment for purposes of more or permanent nature such as colonial administration. The contact between English-speaking aliens and the local population at this step is usually very limited, but will be frequent and recurrent enough. The dominance of the visitors will be such that it will require that the locals learn English.

Indigenisation, also known as nativisation (Kachru 1977) is a process of language change whereby the new variety of English spoken in the new environment becomes distinct from the parent imported variety, and from other indigenised varieties elsewhere. It is at this level that borrowing from/to local languages takes place. Moag (1992: 235) notes that “in Fijian English, there can be no other word for *daruka* (a local vegetable), or for *vesi* (a local hard wood)”. But in the initial phase of indigenisation process, there are, however, conditions which block borrowing above the lexical level from native languages into English, and probably vice versa. The second step of the indigenisation process takes place when members of the local colonial elite (and / or the cadre of menial servants) begin to use English for communication among themselves, and English tends to become the preferred medium for discussing topics associated with the aliens.

The **expansion in use and function** in the life cycle begins with the extension of English to new domains, particularly education, the media, and government services, where English may have been used previously only by an elite group of locals. If this phase is fully run, the role of English shifts from that of a foreign language to a second language, with the birth of an informal variety, i.e. the creation of a separate stylistic variant used for informal purposes. **Institutionalisation**, which is the fourth step in Moag’s life cycle (p. 241), is the phase where local creative writers, teachers and journalists, who have entirely received their education in

local schools, play a key role as they serve as models to their fellow countrymen. Works from local authors play a large part in the curricula of the secondary school and university.

The final stage in the life cycle is the **restriction of the use and function of English**. Moag points out that although this does not appear imminent in the Philippines, “it is clearly under way in other multilingual nations of Asia and Africa” (p.245). The process involves the displacement of English by a local official language, usually through the process of language planning. This new EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contrasts with the EFL stage at the beginning of the life cycle, in that the use of English is more limited. It is used only in technical and scientific subjects at the university level, and for some professional activities, whereas formerly the local elite used the language in all activities relating to school and work.

Schneider’s (2003, 2007 & 2009) model that he calls the ‘Dynamic Model’ has five phases: foundation, exonormative stabilisation, nativisation, endonormative stabilisation, and differentiation. Those phases can be summarised as follows: in phase I, **foundation**, English is brought to a new region, and established as some sort of lingua franca. This is done through trade, exploitation of colonies, and missionary activities. Contacts between English settlers and the indigenous population remains restricted and marginal bilingualism begins to occur. **The exonormative stabilisation** phase is marked by a stable colonial status of the region. English becomes the language of administration, law and education. Contacts between the settlers and the indigenes expand substantially, and bilingualism spreads, largely through education. Some lexical borrowing, most notably words for fauna and flora, and for elements of the local culture get into the new language. This phase is also characterised by the transfer of patterns from indigenous structures into local uses of English, or the emergence of structural innovations.

Nativisation, that Schneider (2009, 286) calls the most important of all the phases of his model, begins when the country starts to be going her own way, culturally and linguistically. The settlers begin to view themselves as permanent residents of the colonial territory. Regular cross-ethnic contacts are the norm. The English language spreads, and linguistic accommodation operates. General bilingualism among the indigenes, possibly moving towards language shift takes place. The occurrence of new features and phenomena characterises the local way of speaking the language. There is phonological innovation with transfer from indigenous languages. Heavy lexical borrowing continues at all levels of the language, and new syntactic patterns creep into it. Another phenomenon that can be observed at this stage is the emergence of mixed codes.

Phase 4, **Endonormative stabilisation** typically follows political independence, and is characterised by a deliberate process of nation building in a young nation (p.287). Speakers are increasingly aware of local linguistic peculiarities in their way of speaking English, but this is accepted as the new local norm, positively evaluated as carriers of an indigenous identity. The codification process of the new variety begins, i.e. the production of dictionaries, grammar, usage guides, etc., which set local standards, and the variety tends to be deliberately used in literary production.

During phase 5, **Differentiation**, in a young country which has achieved full political and cultural independence, within the new national variety, new sub varieties emerge as carriers of social, regional, or ethnic identities. Schneider (2009: 287) remarks that, “in the African context, this stage is not (yet) relevant”. However, the case of Cameroon is atypical. To better

understand the atypical nature of the evolution of Cameroon Francophone English (CamFE) to Moag's and Schneider's models, it is necessary to first have a brief look at the history of the English language in Cameroon as a whole.

Brief history of the English language in Cameroon

Mbassi-Manga (1976: 49) identifies five phases in the development of English in Cameroon: (1) the Slave period, (2) the Free Trade period, (3) the German period, (4) the French and English period, and (5) the post-Reunification period. The first Europeans to come into contact during the Slave period were the Portuguese, through an expedition led by Fernando Po in 1472. Since English privateers were used by the Portuguese to ensure the efficiency of their trade, Mbassi-Manga (1973) says that during that period English had been used on Cameroonian coasts in one form or another. Cameroonians were thus exposed to the language of the slave traders (the Portuguese) and the privateers (English). Simo Bobda (2005: 217) observes that since 1742, Europeans of various nationalities have plied the coastal line of Cameroon. These Europeans, namely the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Germans, the French, the Italians and the British have been coming in turn either as explorers, traders, missionaries or administrators.

With the arrival of the English missionaries of the Baptist Church (Joseph Merrick in 1843 from Jamaica, and Alfred Saker in 1845 from London), the first schools were created in Douala, Bimbia and Victoria (present Limbe), where English and the Duala language were taught. Around the same period, the signing of the Germano-Douala Treaty of 12th July, 1884 made Cameroon a German protectorate. German therefore became the official language of 'Kamerun' (the German spelling of Cameroon). But since nobody was fluent in the new language, although Pidgin English and English were banned in firms and plantations, in their administration the Germans were forced to use English/Pidgin English speakers as their interpreters.

When the Germans' control of Cameroon suddenly ended in 1916 as they lost the First World War, the League of Nations shared Cameroon between France and Britain, and mandated that they administer it. France had the control over East Cameroon (fourth-fifths) of the territory, and Britain, over West Cameroon. So, from 1916 to 1961, date of the independence of West Cameroon, French became the official language of East Cameroon, and English that of West Cameroon. Although these two portions of Cameroon were just placed under the administration of France and Britain, they ruled them like any of their respective colonies, i.e. as separate territories. France applied her Assimilation Rule in her share of the territory, and Britain applied her Indirect Rule in her own.

At the independence of East Cameroon on 1st January 1960, French remained the only official language of the young state. In 1961, when West Cameroon ascended to independence, the two countries reunified again in a federal state called The Federal Republic of Cameroon, with French and English as the official languages. But the use of these languages was mostly restricted to the former East and West Cameroon, respectively. It was at the proclamation of the unitary state in 1972 (United Republic of Cameroon), when national integration became a necessity, that the two languages were given equal constitutional status (by the constitution of 1972 and later by that of 1996). English and French thus became the languages of formal education, law, official documents, diplomacy, radio, television and newspapers. However, French has always been the dominant language in all sectors of the country (Kouega 1999, Echu 1999: 190). In education, the two sub

systems of education of the former colonies (the Anglophone sub system and the Francophone one) have remained until now. In the Francophone sub system, English is taught as a foreign language from primary to high school. At university level, it is taught to Francophone students from first to third year as English for Academic Purposes, within the framework of the Bilingual Training Programme. It is only in the Anglophone sub system of education that English is the medium of instruction, and is taught as a second language. Up to now, in Cameroon, English is not yet the medium of instruction in the Francophone sub system of education.

The above sketch of the history of the English language in Cameroon shows that this language has experienced a lot of ups and downs in the French-speaking part of the country: (1) it was first heard or acquired in an informal way from English privateers during the slave period, (2) was then learned formally from the first English missionaries schools, (3) was used again informally during the German period, (4) reappeared again in secondary schools as a foreign in this portion of the country for the 45 years of the French administration, and the first year of the independence of French Cameroon (1916-1961), and continued after the federation of the two young states in 1961, but was not given equal constitutional status with French. English was finally given equal constitutional status with French only in 1972. This cloudy evolution of English in the French-speaking area of Cameroon perhaps justifies the atypical evolution of CamFE discussed in section 3 below.

The atypical evolution process of Cameroon Francophone English

Looking at the different stages of Moag's (1992) and Schneider's (2003, 2007 & 2009) models of the evolution of non-native varieties of English, it can be said that Cameroon Francophone English (CamFE) is an atypical example to those models in many respects.

- (1) English was not transported (or foundation in Schneider's term) to the former East Cameroon through colonial administration, trade or missionaries activities. This was the case in the former West Cameroon. But it was rather institutionalised in the French-speaking Cameroon as the second official language at the time of the Federal Republic or Reunification of the two Cameroons in 1961. After the banning of the language by the Germans when they took possession of Cameroon in 1884, followed by the French Assimilation Rule from 1916 to 1960, it was clear that by 1961 no French-speaking Cameroonian had any real interest in it.
- (2) Cameroon as a whole can be classified under Kachru's (1988: 1) Outer Circle, i.e. a country that has passed through extended periods of British colonisation. However, the French-speaking part of Cameroon, where CamFE is spoken, and which represents over 83 % of the country's inhabitants (16,217,119), according to the 2010 census, rather underwent the German then the French colonisation.
- (3) From 1961 to 1972, though institutionalised as one of the official languages of the federation, the use of English was restricted to the former British Cameroon. In the French-speaking state of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, it was taught at school as a foreign language, just like Spanish, Latin or German. The teaching was done in French with a lot of translation from and into English, and many people looked down on the subject. English and French were given equal constitutional status to become the languages of administration, law, radio, television, newspapers, and education only in

1972. And even so, as already mentioned, in the French-speaking area of the country, English is not yet the medium of instruction.

- (4) The vast majority of CamFE speakers learn/learned English not from native speakers, but from CamE (Cameroon English) speakers, or from other CamFE speakers. As already pointed out, English was not transported to the former East Cameroon by the native speakers of the language, but by the French just like any foreign language taught within their colonial language policy.
- (5) CamFE speakers learn/learned English not because it was instituted as one of the official languages of the country, but because instrumentally motivated (Tenjoh-Okwen 1987; Pen Tamba 1999). The dominant number of French-speaking Cameroonians naturally places them in a privileged position in their daily transactions in French throughout the country. Even as a school subject, a French-speaking Cameroonian does not necessarily need to have a pass mark in English to have his/her various certificates and degrees. CamFE has rather emerged as the result of the rush of individual French-speaking Cameroonians for English during the last two decades or so. This was not necessarily as a result of any incentive by the government. The few pilot linguistic centres created by the government to train civil servants in French and English were so limited. It is only now that secondary bilingual schools are gradually becoming operational in all the divisional headquarters of Cameroon. And even so, those so called bilingual secondary or high schools are just two distinct schools (Anglophone and francophone) put side by side and run by one principal.
- (6) Schneider (2009: 287) points out that the Differentiation phase of his process is not yet relevant in Africa. Yet, CamFE emerged as sub variety of CamE, with its own distinct features (see Kouega 2008; Safotso, 2012 & 2015) though research is still on. As to Moag's (1992) claim that in the last phase of his life cycle of new Englishes, there will be the restriction in function and use of the new variety, which will revert to its former English as a Foreign Language status. This also did not happen in Cameroon. CamE rather led to the emergence of CamFE. Thus, CamFE can be said to have followed the atypical stages sketched below.

The developmental stages of Cameroon Francophone English

Cameroon Francophone English began with its **Institutionalisation** by the Constitution of 1961. But at that period, English was regarded by French-speaking Cameroonians like any foreign language, i.e. with very little or no interest in it. Many people even saw it as a hurdle, and looked down on it. This was because its use was mostly restricted to the former West Cameroon (British Cameroon). At that period, Francophone Cameroonians also still needed a pass to cross the borders to the former West Cameroon. The same document was requested from Anglophone Cameroonians who wanted to cross the borders to the former East Cameroon (French Cameroon). The creation of a Bilingual Secondary School at Man-O-War-Bay in 1963, in the former West Cameroon to train both Anglophone and Francophone students was the first important decision of that time. Students who attended that school, which was later transformed into Molyko Bilingual Grammar School (in Buea), were trained to write at the same time the *BEPC* (Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle) and its equivalent, the *GCE Ordinary Level*. The creation of Collège Bilingue de Yaounde in 1965 (Echu 1999: 8) later aimed to achieve the same goal. The rare Francophone Cameroonians trained in that

system cannot really be said to have had any impact on their compatriots, as the experiment prematurely came to its end in 1965.

The second phase of CamFE, which can be called **Indifferent phase**, was when French and English were given equal status by the 1972 constitution. This was concretised in 1973 by the transfer of the first Anglophone primary school teachers to teach English in the Francophone areas of Cameroon. Even so, many francophone Cameroonians could not yet have any interest in English. It was taught only in the three last classes of primary schools in a few schools of urban centres, and was not tested at the *CEPE* (Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elémentaires), the equivalent of the *First School Leaving Certificate*. Though English has always been a compulsory subject at the *BEPC*, *Probatoire* and *Baccalauréat*, which are the three certificates of the francophone sub system of education in Cameroon since the French colonial period, until now a francophone Cameroonian child does not need a pass mark in it to pass those certificates. In francophone primary schools, English had to wait till 2001 to become a compulsory subject at the *CEP* (Certificat d'Etudes Primaires). Linguistically and numerically, being the majority group in the country, despite these measures, many French-speaking Cameroonians did not yet see the necessity of English as they did not need it in their daily transactions. Many Francophone learners even saw it as a hurdle / burden.

Phase 3 of the evolution of CamFE, certainly the most important one, can be termed the **Rush for English medium schools**. This phase began around 1990 when French-speaking parents saw the importance of English in the world, and started sending their children to Anglophone primary and secondary schools. Those schools were until then reserved to Cameroonians of Anglophone background. What is very interesting concerning this phase is that at school, the children speak/ spoke English with their Anglophone friends, French or the local language with their francophone classmates, but back home, they speak/ spoke only French or their native languages with their parents or their other brothers/ sisters/ friends who attend Francophone schools. Some of those children were/are even sent to Anglophone secondary schools after having completed their primary school in the francophone sub system of education. The first batch of Francophone Cameroonians who entered the English Modern Letters series of the Higher Teacher Training College of Yaounde to be trained to teach English to both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians was in 1990. They were generally recruited with a bilingual degree (French and English studies). This has become common practice now in the three Higher Teacher Training Colleges (Yaounde, Maroua, Bamili) of Cameroon, where because of the regional balance policy, Francophone students at times outnumber Anglophone ones in that series. The same tendency can be observed in all the faculties of letters in Cameroon.

The fourth phase of this evolution, which is the current one, is the **Spread of Bilingual Francophone Cameroonians**. The high number of French-speaking children in Anglophone schools across the country, the high number of French-speaking Cameroonian civil servants trained in bilingual pilot centres created by the government, the considerable number of Francophone Cameroonians who teach English in secondary/high schools and universities is such that CamFE was bound to emerge as a sub variety of CamE. There are batches of Cameroonians who have never been taught by any CamE speaker teacher, but only by CamFE speakers.

The next phase (phase 5) of the development of CamFE may be its **spread not only to neighbouring countries** such as Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Congo Brazzaville, CAR, Gabon, which are Francophone countries whose students come to study in Cameroonian universities,

but also to the English-speaking areas of Cameroon. Its spread to the neighbouring countries will be due to the fact that French will have the same influence on the speakers of English in those countries as it has been the case with French-speaking Cameroonians. In addition, the teaching of the English language in those countries is generally done by local teachers who generally learned the language in Cameroon, and by Francophone Cameroonians (who already count in number in the teaching staff in those countries). This will certainly be another determining factor in the spread of CamFE. On university campuses in Cameroon, students from French-speaking countries generally (naturally) have as friends French-speaking Cameroonians from whom they acquire a lot of CamFE. Since its creation in 2008, the University of Maroua has been training each year hundreds of Chadians in all its departments, who go back to their country to spread CamFE.

What may cause CamFE to spread to the Anglophone area of Cameroon is, as Atechi (2015) notes, the numerical predominance, the influential economic and political power of Francophone Cameroonians. Though a bit pessimistic as to this to happen, Atechi remarks that “we may witness a scenario where either CamE and CamFE may influence each other in an interesting fashion” (p.30).

CONCLUSION

In summary, it can be said that Cameroon Francophone English respects neither Moag's nor Schneider's model of the evolution of New Englishes. Although it respects some of the phases of the two models, CamFE clearly follows its own way. Contrasted with Moag's (1992) model, in the development process of CamFE, the Institutionalisation phase is the first step and the Expansion in use and function (that I call here the Spread of Bilingual Francophones), the fourth phase. These two phases are respectively phases 4 and 3 in Moag's model. Although it may be too early to say it now, Moag's model phase 5, restriction in use and function, has little chance to occur with CamFE, given the growing interest in English by Francophone Cameroonians. It neither happened with CamE. As to Schneider's model (2003, 2007 & 2009), apart from its phase 3, Nativisation, which in CamFE, may rather corresponds to the Spread of Bilingual Francophones like in Moag's Model, no phase matches with those of CamFE. In short, CamFE is an atypical example of non-native Englishes, which does not fit into any known mould, and which is developing very rapidly. This therefore calls to the attention of scholars to theorise on new models of the evolution process of new Englishes, given the global interest in the language.

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