

## Features of the grammar of Cameroon English and Nigerian English: Corpus evidence<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Cameroon English and Nigerian English are varieties of English which result from the spread of the English language around the world. These two new Englishes, which have grown in neighbouring countries, are gradually being described for subsequent codification. In the domain of grammar, several studies have been carried out to highlight the features that characterise each variety. However, analytical comparisons have hardly been made to determine how similar or different they can be, given that they are both categorised as West African Englishes, their populations share much in common and they communicate on a daily basis. This paper, therefore, proposes a comparative and contrastive description of the grammar of these varieties. The review of previous studies and the exploration of the Corpus of Cameroon English (CCE) and the Nigerian component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-Nigeria) reveal that both varieties are more similar than different, and features of indigenisation are attested at the morphological as well as syntactic levels. For the sake of simplification, and failure to manage syntactic traces (Mbangwana and Sala 2009), questions and passivisation are restructured, and pronoun reduplication is resorted to fill in the empty slot created by a displaced constituent. While subjectless and verbless sentences and the reflexive use of reciprocal pronouns are specific to Nigerian English, *when*-adverbials, *that*-adverbials, and *that*-complements of ‘abuse verbs’ rather characterise the Cameroonian variety.

**Keywords:** Cameroon English, Nigerian English, new Englishes, features, grammar.

### Introduction

Despite the numerous works on the grammar of English, that is British English, in order to enable the language to be used in a somewhat common pattern, the grammars of the varieties that have emerged over time around the globe are still to be fully codified. Several reasons account for this, ranging from attitude to (insufficient) academic investment in this area. Hundt (2001: 737-738) offers two reasons. The first relates to the fact that priority has been given to phonological and lexicological features over grammatical ones because the latter are far less perceptible, accessible and frequent than the former, thus making their empirical description more difficult. The second reason is that variations are considered to be a mere “shift in the linguistic centre of gravity” as illustrated by American English vis-à-vis British English after the Second World War.

Thus, the fact that grammatical variations are either less perceptible or considered as a mere shift already precludes a tough job for those who venture in the study of new varieties of English. Indeed, most early descriptions viewed such changes as errors revealing low mastery of grammatical norms. Evidence of this is seen in the plethora of works in error analysis in the new Englishes settings (Osoba 2014; Ojetunde 2013; Ekundayo 2013; Okoro 2017). In spite of these odds, a number of scholars have taken up the challenge to describe findings in the variations observed that can be considered not errors or shifts, but distinguishing morphological and syntactic features of emerging Englishes. Such endeavours have been reported in academic dissertations and theses (like Daode 2001; Fokam Tchoupo 2013), articles (such as Buregeya 2001; Schmied 2008; Nkemleke 2007; Akinlontan 2016), and books (for example, Blair and Collins 2001; Kachru and Nelson 2006; Mesthrie, Rajend & Bhatt 2008). Devoting a whole book to this effect as Mbangwana and Sala (2009) and Jowitt (2019) have done for Cameroon English (henceforth CamE) and Nigerian English (henceforth NigE), respectively, marks a significant step forward in the description and codification process of these two varieties.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is culled from an ongoing PhD thesis.

Though it might be a daunting task to attempt a thorough description of a language, the challenge is worth it if the urge to elaborate a common communication tool is at stake. The acceptance of different accents and the inclusion of new vocabulary items in a reference dictionary such as the Oxford English Dictionary<sup>2</sup> should equally be extended to morphological and syntactic changes observed.

Setting grammatical norms based on their widespread feature is an approach which deserves attention as it consists in establishing patterns for existing realities. This approach has been in vogue in the evolution of the English language, insofar as no regulatory authority decides and dictates the way the language should be used. Rather, going from empirical observations (with the help of corpora), rules are derived and published for general use. The well-known reference grammar of British English, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk et al. 1985), is based on empirical data, just as is Biber et al.'s (1999) *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. This is not surprising as one of the authors of both books, Geoffrey Leech, regularly claims to be fundamentally empiricist (Leech 2011). Biber et al. (1999: 5) clearly state their position when they indicate that the aim of their book “is to study the various ways in which grammatical features occur and recur in actual use”. Sala (2006), who buys this approach, strongly argues for the democratisation of the language. Referring to Cameroon English, he calls it “community English” and holds that despite the fact that purists will view many of the features that make up a grammar as errors, “when errors become a tendency and then a norm, we can no longer refer to them as errors” (2006: 63). This stance holds and is gradually proven right over time. Taking the case of CamE and NigE, several investigations have been carried out to work out the way they operate. The following interrogations constitute the starting point for investigation: i) what features have been indigenised? ii) how similar or different are CamE and NigE?, and iii) are the differences enough of a criteria to set them apart? Below, the most salient features of the grammar of CamE and NigE, as already established, can be found.

### 1. Pluralisation

It is widely reported in the literature on new Englishes that the pluralisation of some uncountable nouns, mass nouns and proper nouns is a very common phenomenon. As highlighted by Nelson (1992); Buregeya (2001), Igboanusi (2006), Kachru and Nelson (2006), Adedimeji (2007), Mbangwana and Sala (2009), and Opara (2019), among others, such uncountable words as *information, furniture, stationery, chalk, cutlery, equipment, advice, evidence* and *infrastructure* are used with the *-s* plural morpheme. This is illustrated by the sentences bellow from the Corpus of Cameroon (CCE) English and the Nigerian component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-Nigeria). The words in bold character are those that illustrate the point.

- (1) Their money may not be in their bank account but it is on their gluttonous food tables, expensive **furnitures**. [CCE]
- (2) the estimate or possible growth of the population in the few coming years and other important **informations** that will be useful to the government is planing [*sic*] for their economic strategies. [ICE-Nigeria]
- (3) Principally burnt down into ashes beyond recognition were the Director's files, **stationeries**, Uniforms<sup>3</sup>, sports equipment, and furniture. [CCE]

<sup>2</sup> The January 2020 update edition of this dictionary includes a number of words from Nigerian English which have been incorporated in the dictionary (complete list accessible through <https://public.oed.com/blog/nigerian-english-release-notes/>).

<sup>3</sup> Capital letter used in the corpus. Corpus materials are cited in this article without any modifications whatsoever, including punctuation, capitalisation, spelling and structure.

- (4) Materials such as **chalks**, chemicals in laboratories, pen, pencil, exercise books for notes of lesson are in short supplies. [ICE-Nigeria]

Though this may be viewed as ungrammatical in BrE, the pluralisation logic is kept to the end, thus legitimating this form. In other words, subject-verb agreement is applied and the verb is marked plural accordingly, whereas in BrE it is singular subject-verb agreement that obtains, as these sentences heard over the media and in conversations illustrate:

- (5) These **informations** are difficult to verify.  
 (6) The **stationeries** we need *include* rulers, pens, pencils, file folders and clips.

As concerns pluralised proper nouns, they are mainly names of ethnic groups such as *the Hausas*, *the Bamilékés*. However, it is not uncommon to encounter proper names of persons designating the family as a group bearing plural morpheme and preceded by the definite article *the* as in *the Boubas*, *the Ashus*. This should be understood as the members of the family wherein Bouba and Ashu are the persons (generally the father) who head the family and whose name the other members bear as family name. In this case, the –s plural morpheme is phonologically realised.

## 2. Parts of speech

Parts of speech display several features which are worth discussing because of their complexity. These features generally include deletion, insertion, substitution (as in the case of articles), and conversion.

### 2.1. Articles

The use of articles may be quite tricky in these varieties so much so that it is not easy to work out a dependable rule to account for their varied uses. Until now, researchers have simply offered instances of situations where the article is deleted or inserted as opposed to what obtains in the mother variety. Consider for instance this enumeration by Adedimeji (2007: 8) concerning NigE: “I am a student of University of Ilorin”, “make mistake,” “take tribe”, “deliver lecture” “have class”. No information is given as to which article is deleted, where it is deleted and why. Note, however, that except for the first member of the list wherein the definite article *the* is left out before *University*, it is the indefinite article that is omitted between the two member of each pair. This same approach is noticeable in Lawal (2013: 75) and Lamidi (2007: 242). Ojetunde (2013: 261-262) and Mbufong (2013: 480) attempt to explain this by the absence of similar equivalent categories in speakers’ L1. Yet, article deletion is not systematic. This makes this argument questionable.

It has been observed that in both varieties, the definite article *the* usually replaces the possessive adjective (Mbangwana and Sala (2009) echoing Mbangwana (1992: 99)). Note, however, that the trend is restricted to the third persons *his*, *her* and *their* in the context where someone is talking about another person’s kinship or possession in general. Below is an example.

- (7) He sent money to **the** wife. (BrE, His wife)

### 2.2. Prepositions

The observation of preposition/postposition use reveals the complexity of these particles in English. Three situations can be observed. First, while certain verbs normally take a postposition in English, this particle is deleted in new Englishes. Conversely, there are verbs which in the mother variety require no particle but in these varieties take one. Lastly, the particle is substituted. Epoge (2015 and 2016a) offers a detailed investigation of this aspect of the language in Cameroon English. His conclusions are similar to examples offered by Adedimeji, (2007: 9), Lawal (2013: 76), Ekundayo

(2013:42, 44-45) and Okunrinmeta (2014: 326) for Nigeria English. Some of them are illustrated in the following table.

Table 1: Verb particles in CamE and NigE

BrE	CamE/NigE	Illustration
<b>Particle deletion</b>		
To dispose <i>of</i> refuse	To dispose refuse	I don't know how to dispose this refuse.
To reply <i>to</i> a letter	To reply a letter	Has your mother replied your letter?
To write <i>to</i> somebody	To write somebody	We shall write you.
To enable sb <i>to</i> do sth	To enable sb do sth	My job does not enable me live comfortably.
<b>Particle insertion</b>		
To discuss sth	To discuss <i>about</i> sth	The board is discussing about this issue.
To emphasise sth	To emphasise <i>on</i> sth	I want to emphasise on the need to act.
To vanish	To vanish <i>away</i>	The thieves had vanished away by then.
To voice	To voice <i>out</i>	Voice out your grievance.
To comprise	To comprise <i>of</i>	The team comprises of ten members.
<b>Particle substitution</b>		
To chat <i>with</i> sb	To chat <i>to</i> sb	I am chatting to my friend.
To leave <i>for</i>	To leave <i>to</i>	She is leaving to the village this morning.
To ask <i>for</i>	To ask <i>after</i>	Someone is asking after you out there.
To round <i>off</i>	To round <i>up</i>	Let me round up the meeting first.

Epoge (2016: 108-109) further notes that *to come out with* and *to put up with* have undergone semantic extension.

### 2.3. Word class shift

Through the process of lexicalisation, some prepositions have acquired verbal features, that is, head of a phrase which assigns left and right arguments and theta role. The most discussed are *off* and *on*. Epoge (2016a: 111) holds that they are actually clipped phrasal verbs of which the full forms are *switch off* and *switch on*, respectively. This argument can stand since *off* and *on* in this context are used to mean the same as *switch off* and *switch on* and are also mono-transitive verbs.

Other words from other word classes are equally assigned verbal features. Those from the class of adjectives include: *to precise*, *to pregnant*, *to dead*, *to junior*, *to senior*, *to ready* and *to naked* (Adedimeji 2007: 8). Among nouns are *to horn* which means to produce a sound alert using the horn of a vehicle, and specific to NigE is *to paste*, that is, to brush one's teeth (Adedimeji 2007: 11).

### 3. Pronouns in the sentence

Be it in CamE or in NigE, pronouns have developed specific grammatical uses that are worth considering.

### 3.1. Resumptive pronouns

Trace management seems to be a delicate mental operation for World Englishes users. In order to go round the problem, they tend to fill the position left empty by the displaced sentence constituent. Hence the phenomenon of resumptive pronoun that is so common in the new Englishes. Beside Mbangwana and Sala (2009), who discuss it as *trace guilt*, it has been documented in NigE and CamE for instance by Lamidi (2007: 245), Epoge (2015), and Opara (2019). Take for instance sentences (8) and (9) below:

- (8) The people that you sent **them** have come.  
 (9) The village where I am going **there** is far.

In (8), *that* is the relative pronoun generated in the object position of *sent*, while in (9), *where* is the relative adverb which originally occupied the adjunct position of *going*. The displacement of *that* and *where* leads to an empty slot only marked by a trace as can be visible in (10) and (11). But in CamE and NigE, this trace is phonologically realised as pronoun bearing the same features as those of the moved NP: *them* (for *the people*) in (8) and *there* (for *the village*) in (9).

- (10) The people that<sub>i</sub> you sent t<sub>i</sub> have come.  
 (11) The village where<sub>i</sub> I am going t<sub>i</sub> is far.

An exceptional case of resumptive pronoun documented by Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 201) for CamE is the filling of the trace position by a full NP (not a pronoun), as they illustrate by the following sentences.

- (12) We have names like Nathana, Clara and Joel which are familiar **names**.  
 (13) There exists authority which Clara wants that she can thus gain **this authority** over the husband.

The highlighted NPs in these sentences are said to occupy the trace position. The occurrence of a resumptive pronoun, Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 201) say, “is linked to the incapability to manage traces or to link the adjectives in complement or predicate position to their noun heads in subject position”.

Another characteristic that they highlight is the substitution of the possessive relative pronoun “whose” by the relative pronoun “that” to simplify structure. So, instead of having:

- (14) This is the father whose child you sent; or  
 (15) This is the father of which you sent the child,

CamE will rather favour the construction:

- (16) This is the father that you sent the child.

The same observation is made by Fokam Tchoupo (2013: 117) who goes further to note that “that” is used in CamE as a genitive pronoun to replace “whose to introduce a subordinate clause where the antecedent is not a person”. He refers to this *that* as “*that-genitive*”.

### 3.2. Reflexive pronouns

It has further been noted by Lamidi (2007: 245) and Opara (2019: 199) that, in NigE, the reflexive

pronouns *ourselves* and *themselves* have undergone semantic extension to equate reciprocal pronouns *each other* and *one another*. Lamidi (2007: 245) offers the following illustrations quoted from previous works:

- (17) Though they are brother and sister, they do not love *themselves* (Jowitt and Nnamoni 1985: 50).
- (18) Unselfishness means that we should love *ourselves* (Jowitt and Nnamoni 1985: 51).
- (19) My wife and I *never knew ourselves* before we got married (University teacher (May 2004). [In Standard English: ‘My wife and I never had coital relationship/carnal knowledge of each other/ made love to each other before we got married’.]

A feature that deserves great attention here is one highlighted by Lawal (2013: 75-76) concerning NigE. It consists in using some verbs as reciprocal verbs without thus adding the reciprocal pronoun. He offers example sentences like:

- (20) We have known for the ten years.
- (21) We saw this morning.

Wherein *have known* and *saw* are not followed by *each other* or *one another* (depending on the number of people involved) but imply that each person *saw* or *had known* the other(s). These two verbs thus behave in NigE as the verb *to meet*, which inherently is a reciprocal verb and, therefore, does not require the addition of a reciprocal pronoun (which would be redundant).

### 3.3. *They* for passivisation

Last but not least, the pronoun *they* in both varieties under study is used as substitute for passivisation (Lamidi 2007: 244; Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 178-183). Mbangwana and Sala (2009) refer to it as *unbounded they* for the obvious reason that its referent seems to be neutral or loose, even though it may be very clear in the active voice. From the examples they use, this pronoun can be used both for singular/plural and male/female referent. Take for instance the following examples they offer:

- (22) a. The principal has published the results.  
b. **They have published the results.**
- (23) a. The bank is paying salaries.  
b. **They are paying salaries.**
- (24) a. The tenant has soiled the toilet.  
b. **They have soiled the toilet.**

Even though the agent (grammatical subjects) in each of the active sentences (sentences a.) above is clearly indicated, the passivised versions (sentences b.) behave as if they are not. As a consequence, the *by-phrase* is simply omitted in each case. Of course, such a passive form exists in BrE, but it is licensed only in the context of neutral agent generally marked by an indefinite pronoun (someone, anybody, everyone, people, ...). There may, therefore, be a confusion between CamE and NigE passive sentences and normal active sentence with *they* as subject and doer of the action/event. In this situation, only context will help. The two-step rule proposed by Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 191) for passive sentences in CamE, but which can be extended to Nigerian English is as follows:

- (i) *Drop subject-NP*
- (ii) *Insert an expletive “they” in subject position.*

Going by these authors, this form emerges owing to two factors. The first relates to the absence of passive form in the L1 of speakers of these varieties. So, they have to devise strategies to accommodate it in their English. The second factor is purely linguistic and is a consequence of the general avoidance of constituent movement in the sentence, as can already be attested in question formation.

#### 4. Question formation

The structure of the question catches a lot of attention, and the variations are treated quite differently. A striking common feature shared by Yes/No questions and *wh*-questions is the absence of movement transformations as is the case in standard BrE (Anchimbe 1998; Nkemleke 2007; Mbangwana and Sala 2009; Mbufong 2013; Epoge 2016b). In other words, the question is structured as a mere declaration with a final question mark (in writing) or final rising tone (in speech). Consider for instance the questions for the declaration “They will travel next week”:

- (25) Will they travel next week?
- (26) They will travel next week?
- (27) When will they travel?
- (28) They will travel when?

Sentences (25) and (27) illustrate traditional Yes/No and *wh*\_question respectively wherein a) the operator (*will*) is fronted and b) the *wh*\_element (*when*) is moved to sentence initial position. Sentences (26) and (28) correspond to their equivalent in CamE and NigE. As can be seen, they portray the structure of a mere declarative sentence, but with a final question mark. In sentence (28), the *wh*-element is left in situ. In consequence, the structure of the question in these two varieties, as in other new Englishes, can globally be sketched as follows:

- (29) **Subject** (+ auxiliary) (+not) + **verb** (+ object) (+complement) (+ adjunct)

In this structure, the only two mandatory elements are thus the *subject* and the *verb* in the case of a Yes/No question. Depending on the type of verb or the idea to express, the other elements are complementary. Accordingly, the object, the complement and the adjunct will be replaced by the appropriate *wh*-word to generate the *wh*-question. Question (28) above will, for example, have the following structure:

- (30) Subject + auxiliary + verb + adjunct

Implemented on the sentence as

- (31) [subject They [aux will [verb travel [adjunct when]]]]

An observation with this structure is that in the absence of an overt auxiliary in the declaration, CamE and NigE questions will not bother to revive the recessive auxiliary, *do*, to help form the question. For instance, the sentence “He wants a bag” will be turned into questions as (32) and (33) for the traditional Yes/No and *wh*-question patterns, and (34) and (35) for the new Englishes patterns.

- (32) **Does** he want a bag?
- (33) What **does** he want?
- (34) He wants a bag?

- (35) He wants what?

While in (32) and (33), *does*, marked with features of tense and person, is fronted, its absence in (34) and (35) makes these questions syntactically and morphologically very similar to the initial declaration.

According to Nkemleke (2007: 136), this interrogative structure is characteristic of “informal settings” and thus, informal language. Yet the data he bases his analysis on are gathered in and out of school contexts from the speech of informants “having attained at least high school education” (2007: 133). Many example sentences the author quotes for illustration clearly indicate, for instance, that the utterances were made by teachers in the process of teaching or by learners in the classroom learning process. Yet, such a context is categorised as formal. If the conclusions arrived at depict the structure of the question in CamE, it would not be appropriate to qualify it characteristic of informal contexts. Rather, it would be more appropriate, at least, to describe this as feature of spoken CamE grammar, as Biber et al (1999) do for British and American Englishes. But, following the description offered by Mbangwana and Sala (2009), and Igboanusi (2006), such a question formation pattern is noticeable in written language as well.

It can be observed that questions asked with a rising tone create ambiguity with exclamatory sentences as in (36) and (37):

- (36) This looks beautiful?  
 (37) This looks beautiful!

The ambiguity hails from the fact that yes/no questions in CamE and NigE are constructed without movement transformation involved.

A second ambiguity concerns the *wh*-question and is also raised by Buregeya (2001: 17-18) concerning Kenyan English. Given that in new Englishes the *wh*-constituent is left in situ, one may think that the resulting question is an echo-question (or *focalised wh-question* as Epoge (2016b) calls it), that is, a question which in reality rather than just eliciting real information, dominantly conveys such emotions as surprise, indignation, and curiosity. Take for example:

- (38) as soon as possible means what? [CCE]  
 (39) Stephen, you know what? [CCE]  
 (40) “You call yourself a nurse and you can’t even detect a pregnant woman?” Agnes remarked. “**You’re what?**...Oh, all those early morning trips to the toilet. [ICE-Nigeria]  
 (41) “I’m...getting married.” “**What?** Marriage? To whom?” Jimi asked in alarm. [ICE-Nigeria]

When consideration is given to Anchimbe’s (1998) finding that all questions are asked with final rising tone in CamE, we actually realise how difficult it would be to differentiate *wh*-constituent questions from echo-questions. All the four questions above can be interpreted as content questions or echo-question. However, mindful of the immediate context, (40) and (41) are more likely to be echo-question than any other, since surprise is clearly felt.

Another way of constructing echo-question in CamE is done through deletion operation which Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 170ff) identify as the “Super-ordinate clause deletion for echo-questions”. They frame the rule as follows:

- (42) Delete the superordinate clause to have the echo-question



This consists in deleting the main clause of the complex sentence and keeping only the subordinate clause. They provide examples like (43) and (44) where the bracketed strings are the main clauses which have been deleted to obtain the echo-question (bold segment).

- (43) (You say) **that you are going where?**  
 (44) (You say) **that who is going home?**

So, though CamE and NigE follow the same structure as BrE to form questions, they also can generate questions by simply adding rising intonation to the last word of the declarative sentence. This engenders ambiguity with echo-questions.

A last observation on questions relates to question tags. The two varieties of English under investigation here are described as using invariant tags. In other words, the same particle, namely *isn't it*, may be used at the end of any declaration (or anchor) irrespective of tense, auxiliary, person, and positive or negative form. For example:

- (45) you did it **isn't it?** [CCE]  
 (46) Paul would come. **Isn't it?** [CCE]  
 (47) Even in a day, a wife could be pregnant by her husband, **isn't it?"** he asked, looking at Basara [ICE-Nigeria]

In these examples, while in NigE the tag is set aside by a preceding comma, it is either merged with the declaration or constitutes a separate sentence in CamE. In addition, the auxiliary in the declaration is in the past simple tense (*did*, *would* and *could*, respectively) but the tag is in the present simple (*is*). Lawal (2013: 76) adds that *won't you*, and *haven't you* are also used in NigE irrespective of the auxiliary in the statement section. Besides, *not so* is also used in this context in both varieties.

- (48) You met all these things when you came into the universe, **not so?** [CCE]

Just as in BrE, particles such as *right* and *okay* are used as invariant tags, there are discourse particles in CamE and NigE which behave similarly. Just as *isn't it*, they are used invariably. The following is common to both varieties: *now* or its phonological variant *nàa* (Achiri-Taboh 2020) in CamE. Those that are specific to the Nigerian variant (following Igboanusi 2006: 400-401) include: *abi*, *ko*, *to* and *ba*.

## 5. Phrase construction

Reduplication or repetition has been described in the literature as a very common feature of new Englishes (Kachru and Nelson 2006; Igboanusi 2006; Meutem Kamtchueng 2011; Epoge 2014). It consists in reiterating a word consecutively. Though this phenomenon is more likely to be encountered in spoken language, and more often in colloquial speech, Meutem Kamtchueng (2011) amply illustrates its occurrence in literary works as well. Thus, this linguistic phenomenon becomes more formal as it is introduced in written language.

Reduplicated words include content and grammatical words. The largest group consists of content words, among which intensifiers, like *very* and *more*, are the most recurrent. Other content words include adverbs of frequency (*never*), adverbs of manner (*well*, *fast*), adverbs of time (*now*, *before*), adverbs of duration (*and so on*), and adjectives (*long*, *rich*). Among grammatical words are personal pronouns, demonstratives, the quantifier *many* and numerals (*one*, *two*). The effect of this phenomenon is dominantly to emphasise a point as illustrated below:

- (49) we were **very very** sorry about the situation. [CCE]  
 (50) I am sorry it took me this long to reply. **Many many** reasons. [ICE-Nigeria]  
 (51) The Greeks who discovered the joys of writing and reading **long long** ago, centuries before Christ was even born, realised this and captured it in the maxim [CCE]  
 (52) it was evident that Nigerian English has **more more** strong syllables and the patterns does not follow the rhythmic alternation [ICE-Nigeria]

In many such constructions, *very* is suitable to convey the intensification desired. In examples (50) and (51), the first member of the pair may be replaced by *very*, while in (52) the first *more* is used where BrE would use *much*. But if it is *very* that is repeated (as in (49)), the deletion of one may be enough.

Igboanusi (2006: 65-66) adds that reduplication may also be used for pluralisation as in

- (53) I have **small small** children in the house.

Here, the use of *many* before the repeated words would be redundant due to the plural noun *children*.

With regard to the noun phrase (NP, for short), Lamidi (2007: 242), just as Okunrinmeta (2014), observes that in the case of conjoined noun phrase involving a pronoun and a noun in subject position, “The Nigerian English structure has pronoun + noun word order”. This structure obviously departs from what canonically obtains in BrE. As a matter of fact, it is the noun that precedes the pronoun in BrE. The sections in bold character in the following examples culled from ICE-Nigeria illustrate the point.

- (54) **I and my children** must eat.  
 (55) **He and his wife** chose to live here as missionaries, discipling [sic] and supervising the church planters.  
 (56) **She and my father Aluko** had come back from Ojoku, a village near Offa in Ilorin Province

Though no such investigation has yet been published in relation to Cameroon English, the exploration of the corpus reveals that this very feature is equally attested in this variety as the following examples testify:

- (57) “my concern for both Bangem and Tombel is equal since **I and my party**, the UNP, believe in egalitarianism”. [CCE]  
 (58) I am extremely glad to hear that **you and Male1** are doing quite fine now after that tragic journey to Yaounde [CCE]  
 (59) He dismissed it and **he and the driver** discussed the wave of murders by head hunters in Douala. [CCE]  
 (60) Tell her that the day **she and her father** think that they can no longer leave with the child they should call me to come and take him. [CCE]  
 (61) The federal formula which **they and Ahidjo** accepted as the basis of a new constitutional framework seems to have been interpreted differently [CCE]

It is worth observing that CamE seems to be far more liberal in the use of this structure since the range of pronouns involved is far wider than in NigE. As the two sets of examples indicate, the only two pronouns found in this construction in ICE-Nigeria are the first and third person singular pronouns *I and he* (as rightly observed by Lamidi, 2007). While in CCE, only *it* and *we* have no

instances. Comparatively, therefore, this feature will be said to be more characteristic of the Cameroonian variety of English than the Nigerian.

## 6. Clause construction

### 6.1. *Verbless clause*

It is established in the literature that the head of a clause is the verb. It is the element which carries the meaning of the clause and distributes syntactic roles. Though this feature is the norm in all varieties of English, Nigerian English has equally developed the verbless clause, or verbless sentence as referred to by Igboanusi (2006: 401). This author, however, indicates that it is a feature of conversational language and a marker of pleasantry and intimacy. The examples he gives are all wh-questions used to elicit personal information. They are:

- (62) How? ('How are you?')
- (63) How now? ('How are you?')
- (64) How things? ('How are things?')
- (65) How work? ('How is work?')
- (66) How family? ('How is your family?')
- (67) How life? ('How is life with you?')
- (68) How body? ('How is your body?')
- (69) How market ('How is business?')

He further indicates that the deep structure of such sentences "may not be really verbless but the result of a phonological rule in which single consonants (in this case, [z]) are deleted between word boundaries" (Igboanusi 2006: 401). This feature has not been documented in Cameroon English yet.

### 6.2. *Subjectless sentences*

Another feature involving sentence constituent deletion is the construction of subjectless sentences (not attested in CamE). This is not in the case of imperative wherein the subject is not phonologically realised, but it is indeed a declarative sentence of which the subject is omitted. According to Igboanusi (2006: 397), only the third person singular pronoun *it* is concerned by this phenomenon and "Where this omission occurs in the speech of educated users of NE, it is largely influenced by the process of shortening in which the form *it's* is reduced to *is*, especially in spoken English". Yet, Lamidi (2007: 246-7) extends the phenomenon to *he*, *she* and the dummy pronoun *there* in negative sentences. In the examples he provides,

- (70) No problem.
- (71) No entry.
- (72) No thoroughfare/road.
- (73) Not on seat.
- (74) Not at home.

the deletion of the subject leads to the deletion of the verb (*be* in this case), thus turning the sentence into a non-verbal sentence.

### 6.3. *Double subjects*

Contrary to the previous feature, NigE and CamE are also said to be characterised by double subjects or pronoun copying (Meutem Kamtchueng, 2011). It consists in emphasising the subject of the

sentence by “the use of double pronouns (e.g. *this your/my, Me I*) or the pronoun + a modifier/qualifier (e.g. *we children, we the poor*)” (Igboanusi 2006: 398). The effect, the author says, is to emphasise the subject. As a matter of fact, that the (subject) personal pronoun precedes the other element of the group draws more attention to the referent. This construction is not syntactically marked by a comma as is the case for the apposition. Examples include:

- (75) asked for a rescue but the driver and the motor boys answered **we we** cannot take donkey to the river and force it to drink [ICE-Nigeria]  
 (76) **that his** teaching was of the highest quality. [ICE-Nigeria]  
 (77) In fact in **that their** house Mama is the best. [CCE]

Emphasis is further highlighted by the prepositional phrase *as for* or *for* as in

- (78) **As for me I** won't get tired of waiting for them. [ICE-Nigeria]  
 (79) **As for me I** am fine. [CCE]  
 (80) **For me I** believe that the upbringing of my children is my sole responsibility. [ICE-Nigeria]  
 (81) So **for me I** am in form three and I am trying for my own education. [CCE]  
 (82) **For her she** has been taken up and not adopted. [CCE]

A peculiar structure of doubled subjects highlighted by Meutem Kamtchueng (2011: 10) is the use of an object pronoun after the verb to echo the subject pronoun. For example:

- (83) “*I went me in to see how much lore I could still do to prepare for that rain*”  
 (84) “*I sat me quiet*”

Though this construction is very common in spoken language, the examples cited by the author are from literary works. This indicates the appropriation of this feature by writers.

#### 6.4. Dangling modifier

Simo Bobda (2002: 78-80) warns (non-native) English language users against dangling modifiers, which, he says, do not modify anything in the sentence. Yet, this warning has not prevented the expansion of the phenomenon in the language; the reason why it is now analysed as a distinguishing feature vis-à-vis British English. In addition to Sala (2005), Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 218-228) ponder over this issue. Syntactically, the dangling modifier stands in sentence-initial position and is separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma. These authors argue that dangling modifiers violate the principle of recoverability known as “Equi-NP-deletion”. This is due to the fact that they “flout two rules in English that govern modifier topicalisation: The Co-indexation Condition and The Restrictive Relative Constraint” (Sala 2005: 60). In addition, dangling modifiers fall within a general problem with the interpretation of empty categories in Cameroon English and their interpretation is based on context. Examples from Sala (2005: 61) include:

- (85) Coming back from work yesterday, a car knocked him down.  
 (86) Trapped in the wrecked car, we could remove him only by sawing the door open.  
 (87) At the age of twenty, do not expect your daughter to behave like a baby.

(85) is semantically licensed on condition that the PRO subject of “coming” be co-indexed with the object “him” in the lower clause and not with “car”. In other words, it must be *him* that was

“coming back from work yesterday”. In (86), co-indexation must be between the PRO subject of “trapped” and not the object “him” of “remove.” As concerns (87), the topicalised constituent must be co-indexed with “your daughter”, not with the integrated subject of “do not expect.” In this way, even if the sentence with a dangling modifier may sound awkward to an unaccustomed ear, and even ambiguous, context and logic are used in the Cameroonian context to work out the intended meaning.

### 6.5. *That-complement clause*

Complements in language are added to head that in themselves do not convey all the meaning intended. They can have different structures and can follow any content word and the preposition. Complements beginning with *that* are clauses which typically follow a noun (*that*-nominal), a verb (*that*-complement) or introduce a relative clause (*that*-relative) as in (88), (89) and (90) successively.

- (88) We have the *impression that things are changing*.
- (89) We *think that things are changing*.
- (90) Our *impression that things are changing* has been confirmed.

Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 102-107) discuss the changes brought in by CamE users concerning *that*-complements. They observe that this complement is added to verbs which normally do not allow it by virtue of their semantic charges and the number of arguments they assign. The authors call them *abuse-verbs* and describe them as having the following features:

- i) they are verbs of saying
- ii) they have switched from [say + content] in BrE to [say – content] in CamE
- iii) they are mono-transitive verbs
- iv) they involve a mental event

Such verbs include *abuse, insult, mock, laugh (at), curse, phone* and *refuse*. Going by the second feature, these verbs must take a *that*-complement to express the idea intended. Here are some illustrative sentences.

- (91) They insulted him *that he is a rascal*.
- (92) The president phoned *that he will be late*.
- (93) The diver abused her *that she is a prostitute*.

In BrE, these sentences would end after the direct object (*him* in (91) and *her* in (93)) because the verbs inherently mean “say rude things about someone”. Yet the absence of this meaning by virtue of feature ii) above imposes the completion of the verb with the *that*-complement that is added. This complement would have been expressed in BrE by an infinitival clause or a sequence introduced by *saying that*. The sentences above would thus be

- (94) They insulted him *saying that he is a rascal*.
- (95) The president phoned *to say that he will be late*.
- (96) The diver abused her *saying that she is a prostitute*.

As can be seen, the *that*-complement in the CamE sentences has the same explanatory functions as the infinitival and *saying that* sections in BrE. For this reason, Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 105) conclude “that “that” in *that*-complements has the feature [+explanation (of content)]”. In the absence of the literature to document this feature in Nigerian English, the corpus was browsed but no instance

of such a construction could be found.

### 6.6. Adverbial clauses

Adverbials are defined as sentence constituents meant to provide circumstantial information such as reason, time, place, result, contrast, concession, and manner. The adverbial clause in English generally comes in sentence peripheral position and is introduced by a subordinating conjunction which determines the type of circumstantial information added. Yet, as Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 107-123) demonstrate, CamE has developed an adverbial clause introduced by *that*. As it is known, this lexeme is either a relative pronoun (which introduces a *that*-relative clause) or a complementiser (introducing a *that*-complement clause). As discussed in the previous section, *that*-complement clauses already display specificities in this variety of English. *That*-adverbial clauses may, in some cases, be confused with CamE *that*-complement when the same category of verbs is selected. Take for instance

(97) He insulted me that I am too lazy.

By virtue of the conditions stated above in relation to *that*-complements, the *that*-clause “that I am too lazy” is a complement of the verb *insulted* if it provides the content of the insult (if being lazy is considered an insult). The corresponding question would be: **What** was the insult? And the answer would be: *The insult was that I am too lazy*. However, if the speaker admits to be lazy, then the same clause will be interpreted as giving the reason for the insult (**Why** did he insult you – *He insulted me because I am too lazy*). In this case, it will function as an adjunct of reason in the same way that the bracketed strings in these other examples do.

(98) He is crying [that I have eaten his food.]

(99) His boss bears a grudge against him [that he is always coming late.] (Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 107).

Fortunately, verbs that licence *that*-adverbials have features that distinguish them from those commanding CamE *that*-complements. Syntactically, the *that*-adverbial clause has the following characteristics identified by the authors:

- Unlike the adverbial clause in BrE, it does not allow free displacement from sentence periphery to sentence periphery. The authors call this the *Strict Adjacency Condition*, which holds that the adverbial clause should always follow the verb.
- It can be questioned. In other words, a *wh*-question can be generated in the adverbial clause but is left in situ (by virtue of the absence of movement transformation in question formation in this variety of English). Therefore, sentence (100), generated from (98) will have as BrE equivalent (101).

(100) He is crying that what?

(101) Why is he crying?

As it appears, *that what* is CamE equivalent for *why* in this context. It can only be placed after the verb. This particular feature of the *that*-clause is possible in the context of a reproach.

- In case it expresses reproach, that is, a specific category of reason, “the relationship between the superordinate and the subordinate clause is that of *non-reason*, which is not attested in English” (Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 123). In other words, the event in the main clause does not condition that of the subordinate clause. In this case, the sentence must be either interrogative or negative as shown below.

(102) You have eaten all the food that I should eat what? (Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 114)

(103) I will not go to Bamenda that I want to see him. (Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 117)

- In case of iterative construction, the *that*-adverbial clause must follow the *that*-complement clause as instantiated below.

(104) He refused [*that*-complement that he will not eat the food [*that*-adverbial that it is too small.]] (Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 118)

- Only the accomplished aspect is allowed in the main clause. In other words, the verb in the main clause must be in the past or at least have no implication with the future.
- Semantically, the *that*-adverbial introduces i) cause/reason, ii) purpose, or iii) result. In consequence, its interpretation is essentially context-bound, chiefly that the structure may be very similar to the *that*-complement. Here are some examples given by Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 118)

(105) We are only crying that the government should give us roads. (purpose/complement)

(106) He is crying that I have eaten his food. (cause)

(107) He cried that his eyes were swollen. (result)

- In order to distinguish *that*-adverbial from other *that*-clauses, the authors frame the following rule: that <sup>adverbial</sup> / in the context [IP Y<sub>i</sub> ] + ...+[IP \*X<sub>i</sub> ], understood as ““that” is that <sup>adverbial</sup> if it is not co-indexed with a constituent Y in the superordinate IP” (Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 122). We believe that the non-co-indexation condition is not necessary if it is admitted that redundant pronouns are a feature of CamE. In this line, sentences (108) and (109) are equally illustrative of *that*-adverbials.

(108) He tore the dress<sub>i</sub> [that I stole his watch<sub>j</sub>.] (Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 122)

(109) He tore the dress<sub>i</sub> [that I stole it<sub>i</sub>.]

Both sentences can be answers to the question *why did he tear the dress?* In either case, the reason for tearing is theft, but the object stolen is different. In the example provided by the authors (sentence (108)), it is the *watch* that was stolen, whereas in (109) it is the same *dress*. Therefore, the action of tearing in (108) is motivated by revenge, while it is to sanction an unlawful act (theft) that the dress is torn in (109). For sure, the *that*-clause in sentence (109) can also be interpreted as *that*-relative since it is normal for traces to be filled by resumptive pronouns in CamE. Consequently, only the context can finally help determine if a *that*-clause in CamE is a complement, a relative or an adverbial.

Adverbial clauses introduced by *when* are of interest too in CamE. In many respects, they behave like the *that*-adverbials. Concretely, *when*-adverbials, as discussed by Mbangwana and Sala (2009: 129-139), in addition to providing circumstantial information of time, introduce a contrast, a non-reason relation of the type illustrated in these examples:

- (110) You are already condemning me when you did not even listen to the story.  
 (111) He is insulting me when I am his boss. (Mbangwana and Sala 2009:132)

A priori, one may interpret the adverbial clauses in these examples as temporal adverbials. However, close consideration reveals that there is more than that since there is a kind of false causality between the two parts of the sentence: the non-reason relation. The event in the subordinate clause is not supposed to obtain if the main clause is true. There is, thus an attitude of reproach of the speaker.

Just like *that*-adverbials, CamE *when*-adverbials must abide by the strict adjacency condition, that is, they must follow the main clause and thus cannot deliberately move from sentence periphery to sentence periphery. Besides, this type of adverbial can also be questioned. This time around, it is a yes/no question. The consequence of this transformation is a reprobativ question which shows the non-logic between the two events in the sentence. Thus, the resulting question is actually a rhetorical question. For instance:

- (112) You want me to eat when I am not hungry? (Mbangwana and Sala 2009: 136)  
 (113) He abuses me when I am he boss?

According to the speaker in (112), s/he should not be forced to eat given that s/he is not hungry. Likewise, the boss in (113) does not understand (or admit) that s/he is abused despite his/her status.

All the features discussed here concerning clause construction have so far not been documented in Nigerian English yet.

## 7. Aspect

Though aspect is globally equally used in both native variety and nativised ones, one aspectual distinguishing feature of CamE and NigE is the use of the progressive form with the verb *to have*, state verbs and verbs of thought where BrE would use the non-progressive, namely the simple form (Lawal 2013:75). Examples include:

- (114) She is having a problem with her car.  
 (115) I am hearing that you do not go to school?  
 (116) I am seeing you.  
 (117) Are you understanding?

## Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Cameroon English and Nigerian English are two varieties of English which can also be differentiated based on grammar as is the case in terms of phonology and lexis. Grammatical features which have been indigenised pertain to all the aspects of language including subject verb agreement, parts of speech, verb tenses, phrase, clause and sentence construction.

A panoramic look at the distribution of the distinguishing features indicates that NigE and CamE are very close varieties to the point that one can actually question the validity of distinguishing them as distinct varieties from the grammatical perspective. Yet, a closer look reveals that there are key syntactic structures like *that*-complements, *when*-adverbials and *that*-adverbials which demarcate CamE while verbless and subjectless sentences are specific to NigE. Furthermore, even though a feature like *pronoun + noun word order* in conjoined subject is common to both varieties, it proves to be more elaborate in CamE whereas it is restricted to the pronouns *I* and *he* in NigE. Therefore, it can be argued that it is a feature which will more likely direct to the Cameroonian variety.

As concerns question formation, both varieties follow the general trend in new Englishes of not



moving the operator and the wh-element leftward, but resort to final rising tone to mark yes/no questions. It arises that such question formations generate ambiguity so much so that it is not always obvious to differentiate a genuine question from an echo question. Besides, CamE has another special construction for echo questions which consists in deleting the main clause of a complex sentence and keeping only the subordinate clause introduced by the complementiser *that* in which the wh-constituent is left in-situ.

We will conclude with these words by Okunrinmeta (2014:321), about the way NigE has developed grammatical specificities to say that

these Nigerian forms have been created, sustained and made meaningful by the Nigerian linguistic and cultural situation and should, therefore, be treated, not as errors, but as permissible local variations whose legitimacy and appropriateness within the Nigerian setting lie on their ability to reflect and express the Nigerian experience.

Of course, this remark is not valid for Nigerian English alone, but it extends to any new variety of English, including Cameroon English. All the features discussed above thus contribute to establish Nigerian English and Cameroon English as varieties distinct from British English from which they stem, on the one hand, and distinct from each other, on the other hand. As indicated, some of these features are attested in other varieties of English but their spread may posit as the demarcating criterion to tag them more with one variety than another (see for instance the inventory offered by the electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English at <https://ewave-atlas.org/>).

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