

# The Standard of English in the New Writings of Anglophone Cameroon

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## ***The Standard of English in the New Writings of Anglophone Cameroon***

One of the ways a language is learned, especially a foreign language, is by personal extensive reading. When people read widely, they are exposed to the language of what they read and so learn it consciously or unconsciously. What they come across in their reading remains in their minds and adds to their general knowledge. This includes knowledge of the language they read. General wide reading reinforces the language students have been formally taught in their language classes. Exposure to grammatically correct language would improve their language skills. On the other hand, exposure to incorrect language would negatively affect the language skills of foreign learners and cause them to use wrong language comfortably, not knowing that they are erroneous in their usage.

The printed word is powerful, and many people, especially young learners, believe that what is printed is necessarily correct. Hence the novels available in our markets for the entertainment of our population through personal extensive reading, and the books selected to use for the teaching of literature in secondary schools have great influence on the language production of the readers. Standard British English is taught in Cameroon schools. The question to ask is whether new Anglophone Cameroon writings, and especially those selected for the teaching of literature, are up to the standard of English expected of young Cameroonians. Broughton *et al.* say:

The practice of extensive reading needs little justification. It is clearly the easiest way of bringing the foreign learner into contact with a substantial body of English. If he reads, and what he reads is of some interest to him, then the language of what he has read rings in his head, the patterns of collocation and idiom are established almost painlessly with a range and intensity which is impossible in terms of oral classroom treatment of the language, where the constraints of lock-step teaching and multiple repetitions, however necessary they may be, impose severe restrictions on the sheer volume of the amount of language with which pupils come into contact. (1980 110)

Edna P. DeHaven declares:

Library books offer many possibilities for expanding vocabulary and other skills and appreciations. [...] Wide reading improves children's thinking and conceptualization and helps them develop a general awareness of the relationship and structure of ideas. Quality books acquaint children with good expository and creative writing and help them develop a cognitive framework for self-expression. (1979 465)

Are Anglophone Cameroon new writings books of quality? Can they help children develop their creative writing as well as enhance or improve on their grammar, spelling and punctuation? In evaluating material that should be used for school teaching or that should be placed on the syllabus for Cameroonian schools, the powers that be should consider whether:

the material is compatible with knowledge of the children's language development, and provides for continuous and well-rounded growth in using and enjoying language. (DeHaven 467)

To carry out this study, two novels used for literature in Forms 2 and 3 respectively in some secondary schools in Anglophone Cameroon have been selected. They are Neba's

*Manka'a* (2002), and Wangmonde's *A Challenge to Young Girls* (2002). Data collected from these novels are exposed below. I will deal with only three categories of errors in this study: grammar, punctuation and spelling inconsistencies. The model used for the study is error analysis.

**Novel 1: *Manka'a***

*Grammar/Sentence Structure*

The grammar errors found in *Manka'a* are of various types. The first type to be identified has to do with relative pronouns – who, which, that, whom, whose – which introduce relative clauses in complex sentences. Relative pronouns are mutually exclusive and relative clauses function as post-modifiers of nouns. However, there is another set of relative pronouns – who, whom, which, whoever, whomever, whichever, what, whatever – that introduce nominal relative clauses. Nominal relative clauses function as noun phrases so they can be subjects and direct objects of sentences (Greenbaum & Nelson: 2002 104; 128). In the text under study, there is an instance where two mutually exclusive relative pronouns are juxtaposed in the same clause, instead of using a single nominal relative pronoun.

The second type of error discovered is that of dangling modifiers. A dangling modifier has no subject of its own, and its implied subject cannot be identified with the subject of the sentence though it can usually be identified with some other phrase in the sentence (ibid. p.158-9). Absolute clauses are non-finite or verbless adverbial clauses which have their own subjects. If adverbial clauses have no subject of their own, their implied subject is generally the same as the subject of

the sentence; if this is not the case, then there is an instance of dangling. In *Manka'a*, there are several dangling modifiers.

Tense inconsistency is the third category of errors found in the text we are examining. Time references are not always considered during conjugation of verbs. This is not acceptable in a work of art used for the teaching of literature in schools.

Apart from the above-mentioned kinds of error, several other isolated cases occur throughout the novel, as can be seen in the table below. Red ink indicates where errors occur. The symbol  $\approx$  in the third column of the table indicates that the error type is the same as the previous one mentioned.

**Table 1:** Grammatical Errors in *Manka*

Error	Page	Type of Error	Suggested Correction
...for Manka'a was not good enough to harvest that which she had nursed, sown and tended to.	2	Two mutually exclusive relative pronouns juxtaposed instead of one nominal relative pronoun	Manka'a was not good enough to harvest what she had nursed, ...
Convincing the Palm Board about his discovery was not easy. Made up of people who were used to the old system, it was difficult to put through the present day technology.	5	Dangling modifier	Since the Board was made up of people who were used to the old system, it was difficult to put through to them the present day technology.
Being brilliant in her school her father had worked hard on his farms, harvesting palm nuts and producing palm oil to sell in order to see her through her education.	15	$\approx$	Because she was brilliant at school, her father had worked hard on his farms, ...
People said she will become a big woman ...	18	Tense inconsistency	People said she would ...
'Eh!' He exclaimed. 'So it's you, my daughter? I had been wondering who could	22	$\approx$	I have been wondering ...

be visiting, when I saw the vehicle outside?’			
...and his wife had learnt the husband’s dialect so well that a stranger to the family will find it difficult to believe that she was not of the tribe.	23	≈	would
They wondered, however, if a union of the people of Nte will be as successful as that of the students.	63	≈	would
In any case if things did not brighten up she will make do with what God had in store for her.	64	≈ and punctuation	In any case, if things ... she would ...
The success of the program had replaced many hectares with the new hybrid species.	5	Lack of an animate subject	Because of the success of the program, the new hybrid species had been planted on many hectares, replacing the old crop.
He has been returning to the house each day to be taken care of by Manka’a; a girl, he realized, who was not only beautiful and soft spoken but accomplished in all household chores.	12	Omission of ‘also’ between ‘but’ and ‘accomplished’	...who was not only beautiful and soft spoken but also accomplished in all household chores.
Sanitation was divided into two main groups: Cleaning around the compounds and repairing latrines, cleaning the paths to the farms and the maternity compound.	51	Omission of co-ordinating conjunction ‘and’	Cleaning around the compounds and repairing latrines and cleaning the paths to the farms and the maternity compound.
Fortunately, the number of such girls was very negligible to those who knew what they wanted and fought hard to get it.	43	Omission of word	...negligible compared to ...
For now she should be counted out of the election and the first candidate to stand.	48	Use of infinitive instead of modal auxiliary	Should stand
...their after noon meal	60	One word	afternoon
‘It is the Lord God that	25	Wrong relative	It is the Lord God who

made us to be what we are today. ...'		pronoun; 'make' not followed by an infinitive	made us be what we are today.
...'The Founder Father' of this our association, ...	42	Mutually exclusive determiners	The Founding Father of this (our) association ...
Children brought up in righteousness can only breed good.	44	verb + adjective instead of Verb + noun	breed goodness
The hospital had ran smoothly	117	No mastery of past participle of verbs	... had run...
The hospital had ran smoothly with many trained villagers in the staff because of the bright idea of a scholarship fund, she had insisted be put in place, Nteh had capable people to handle the technical and managerial problems in all the projects.	117	Ambiguity due to poor punctuation	The hospital had run smoothly with many trained villagers on the staff. Because of the scholarship fund she had insisted be put in place, Nteh had capable people to handle the technical and managerial problems in all their projects.

### *Punctuation*

As far as punctuation is concerned, the greatest weakness manifested in *Manka'a* is the absence of obligatory commas in sentences. Non-restrictive clauses should be separated from the rest of the sentence with a comma or a pair of commas, as the case may be. Adverbial clauses are punctuated with commas, as well as vocatives and interjections. These punctuation rules are not always observed in the text. Then there is the use of commas where a major punctuation mark is needed, thereby creating comma splices. In addition, some sentence fragments and a few run-on sentences do exist in the text. Lastly, rules for punctuating direct speech are also not always followed. For example, in the case of a final reporting clause, if the direct speech sentence would ordinarily end in a full stop, one puts a comma before the quotation marks, and the first letter for the reporting clause is in lower

case (except it is a proper noun). This rule has not been observed all the time in *Manka'a*. The table below contains examples of wrong punctuation. Where two consecutive words appear in red ink, a comma is missing between them. I have given a corrected version of the first few only, as examples. Again, where the symbol  $\approx$  appears on the third column of the table, the error type has been repeated.

**Table 2:** Punctuation Errors in *Manka*

Error	Page	Type of Error	Suggested correction
Her once smooth and full cheeks were showing some paleness. But why not given what she had to do?	2	Omission of comma	...why not, given what...
He immediately realized that though built of wooden boards, the club was well looked after with clean chairs and various water-colour pictures of the crops grown in the area.	6	$\approx$	...that, though... ...after, with...
At the market Mr. Ayuk gave some money to Manka'a and took the market basket from her.	8	$\approx$	...market, Mr....
When they returned Mr. Ayuk helped Manka'a to ...	9	$\approx$	...returned, Mr....
He then relaxed in the parlour going over the notes he had made on the plantation while Manka'a prepared his super.	9	$\approx$	...parlour, going ... ...plantation, while ...
...Mr. Ayuk, after his lunch went to see Mr. Abah	9	$\approx$	...lunch, went...
As he admired the pictures on the walls he heard a beautiful voice ...	10	$\approx$	...walls, he...
Madam could not hide the disappointment from her voice though she had not intended to show it.	10	$\approx$	...voice, though ...
...madam explained thinking that the agriculture man was interested in the vegetables growing out there.	10	$\approx$	...explained, thinking...
'I just want to know how you came about speaking English so well although you are only a servant. Besides you are not working in an	11	$\approx$	



office.'			
While they drank some of the soft drinks Mr. Ayuk looked thoughtful.	12	≈	
As a brother I wish to send you back to school.	13	≈	
While at college she had just the basic necessities but never needed more.	15	≈	
'... First of all I have to speak to Mr. Abah if you would permit me to.'	12	≈	
In her fourth year after writing the promotion examination into fifth form Manka'a was again called to the principal's office.	19	≈	
...two children ran out of the house and stood expectantly not knowing who was in the car.	20	≈	
'Fine thank you, sir,' Madam replied	21	≈	
The girls then took her on a grand tour of the school showing her the renovations and additions that had been done in her absence.	27	≈	
But it was to be the case of she-who-laughs last for many girls were to scrub the walls in months to come under the strict eyes of the chief cook.	27	≈	
She was determined to make Mr. Ayuk and her uncles and aunts proud of her now that her parents were gone.	29	≈	
Anyway, with class work, the choir and having regularly to advise her friends, she did not have time to ruminate on her loss.	29	≈	
She would of course keep their secrets.	29	≈	
Somewhat reassured the girl left shortly after.	31	≈	
Mr. Ayuk and his wife came to visit Manka'a bringing her some snacks.	31	≈	
As Muma was handing over the program, Ngwe, a university student walked in to the parlour.	36	≈	
As they worked on Manka'a pointed	37	≈	

out some necessary amendments such as, ...			
The students came on stage and to the great surprise of the audience the leader was Manka'a.	43	≈	
I tell you my children that is what happened in those days when ...	44	≈	
For now she should be counted out of the election and the first candidate to stand.	48	≈	
The weeds grew healthily preventing the growth of the crops.	50	≈	
... the students themselves decided not to work on the farms claiming they had much school work to do during the holidays.	50	≈	
During their discussions Manka'a's contributions proved to be invaluable.	50	≈	
As Manka'a read the minutes of the executive, she explained further exhorting the students to move on.	52	≈	
The ground was well weeded with the hoes and the paths widened allowing four pregnant women to walk abreast.	53	≈	
The president could not be found. He had to take the first sip being the holder of the highest post.	53	≈	
The president at that moment was talking with the Nurse in charge finding out what the students could do for the maternity in addition to clean-up.	53	≈	
We would be resting in their shade now instead of under the blazing sun.	54	≈	
As students we should think of making a difference.	55	≈	
Various ingredients mostly green spices were put in at intervals.	60	≈	
Their loincloths firmly in place the children danced round the drummers.	62	≈	
As they approached one of the parents both boys broke into styles displaying their flexibility.	63	≈	

She prayed frequently asking the almighty Father to guide her ....	64	≈	
'She was attending ..., wasn't she?' Mr. Ayuk asked surprised.	64	≈	
She listened surprised and fell on her knees thanking God for answering her prayers.	65	≈	I listened, surprised, and fell on knees, thanking God for ...
Mr. Abah was quite happy as the school concerned was in the same town they were [in].	65	≈	
Madam noticing the look on his face fled out of the house when he took a step towards her.	66	≈	
He informed her that he had been posted to a rural area not too far from the village a distance that could be done in a day on foot.	70	≈	
Manka'a for once did not know what to do.	70		
To her surprise she saw her brother nodding at her approvingly and with determination as if wanting to move her head along with his.	71	≈	
During that holidays, Muma handed over the post of President to another since he was no longer a student.	71	≈	
One morning while Manka'a and her junior ones were waking up, they heard a loud noise in the ...	72	≈	
His excellence as all can see is now in his children.	72	≈	
'The traditional rites have started,' Kwi replied taking the seat directly opposite her sister.	73	≈	
As he ate he wondered what on earth could please such a humble girl. Whatever it was he decided to find out because it was his wish to make her happy for the rest of his life.	81	≈	
When she had obeyed he continued.	84	≈	
We are sending you to build your own home thereby increasing the family.	84	≈	

At this point one of Muma's uncle[s] would step forward and hand over a cock and some money apologizing profusely for their lack of concentration on this matter	86	≈	
They danced forward showing necklaces, various coloured cowries and precious stones.	86-87	≈	
The Nteh Village Development Association unites every Nteh male and female creating a sense of belonging to each and everyone.	94	≈	
'I'll arrange something, the Minister replied turning to leave.	96	≈	
After her speech Manka'awalked down the aisle greeting the people close-by.	96	≈	
Even if she, Ngwe, would not be elected into the post of president of the association Manka'a would not be there, by the power of the PM.	98	≈	
'You have not taken your tea, Miss,' the office steward told her looking surprise[d] at the untouched cup.	98	≈	
'Oh! By the way have you given the PM tea?'	99	≈	
The Pm raised an eye brow and walked into the office followed by Ngwe.	100	≈	
In one of these meetings, Ngwe as one of the representatives from the Headquarters stood up and talked to the people.	108	≈	
'Possibly. You don't have to worry though. ...'	115	≈	
'Yes God has clearly been with us. ...'	115	≈	
They pulled off the thick covering and stood looking upwards open mouthed. Manka'a stood towering some ten meters in stone smiling at them.	119	≈	
Her shapely legs were barely covered by the threadbare dress she had on; a dress she had mended so	1	Wrong use of semi-colon. Use a hyphen in-	...she had on – a dress she had mended so often

often and could merely succeed to keep it clean without destroying the delicate fibers.		stead	and could merely succeed to keep clean, without destroying its delicate fibers.
He has been returning to the house each day to be taken care of by Manka'a; a girl, he realized, who was not only beautiful and soft spoken but accomplished in all household chores.	12	≈	...Manka'a – a girl ...
'What,' asked the man in her bed; he who was far from being Mr. Right.	87	Wrong use of semi-colon + no question mark	'What?' asked the man in her bed, he who was far from ...
However, I feel it is time you knew a few places, so we will find them out, I have learnt there are some touristic sites in town.	11	Comma splice	...find them out. I have learned...
Firstly, I thought you were not mature enough, secondly, I did not want you to be distracted from your school work.	56	≈	...mature enough; secondly, ...
Muma swallowed twice, He did not wish to fail in his mission.	56	≈	...swallowed twice; he did ...
Ngwe was restless, She could imagine the joy and happiness surrounding the marriage of Muma and Manka'a.	77	≈	Ngwe was restless; she could...
'No, not now, thank you.' He answered.	9	Faulty direct speech punctuation	"No, not now, thank you," he said.
'Oh! No. Don't get me wrong.' He said.	11	≈	'...wrong,' he said.
'I am an orphan.' Manka'a said sadly.	12	≈	'...orphan,' Manka'a said.
'The bitch.' She shouted.	87	≈	
"I'll very much love to," Manka'a answered, 'But I don't know what will happen...'	12	≈	
'Eh!' He exclaimed.	22	≈	
'Tell me sister,' She said.	75	≈	
'Your husband, my child,' Put in another, 'is greatly respected in the whole village. ...'	83	≈	

'What did you say?' She asked.	99	≈	
Every congregation member came to listen to, what was termed by all, 'the angelic voices'.	31	Unnecessary commas.	
Her stupid arguments and open hatred of a very intelligent and well behaved Manka'a, had frightened young men from her.	76	≈	
The preparation of the traditional meal being handed down the line by the most natural teacher: experience.	60	Sentence fragment	The preparation of the traditional meal had been handed down ...
Now I am able to help my junior one's in primary school.	12	Wrong use of apostrophe; no possessive involved	...junior ones in primary school

*Spelling Inconsistency*

In *Manka'a*, the word “program” is spelled on page 5 using the American orthographic system. One would think that the author has decided to use that system throughout his work. However, on the following page he uses the British spelling system to spell the word “colour,” and on page 9 “parlour.” This can be very confusing to young secondary school students. Which spelling system are they to use in the same piece of writing? Are they free to switch from one to the other at will? Do they even know that there exists two different spelling systems for the English language?

**Novel 2: A Challenge to Young Girls**

*Grammar Errors*

Of the grammar errors found in *A Challenge to Young Girls*, verb tense inconsistency and failure to express time relationships accurately top the list. Table 3 illustrates this.

Table 3: Grammatical Errors in *A Challenge to Young Girls*

Error	Page	Suggested correction
... Mboh said curtly and moved into the kitchen[,] hoping Yaah <i>will</i> go away because the girl was the last person she wanted in their compound.	6	would
Mboh saw Yaah as a source of inconvenience to her because her father <i>will</i> always be comparing her with the inspector's daughter.	8	≈
It is no use to cry about the bad behaviour of children and do nothing to correct and prevent them from getting involved in things that <i>will</i> lead them into crime.	9	≈ (conditional)
She is jealous of your good results. Even if I were the one, <i>I will</i> do the same.	10	≈ (conditional)
... the only way to prepare a child for a better life was to give him or her a good education[,] otherwise such a child <i>will</i> end up in the general labour sector of the labour market ...	4	≈
She thought mournfully of her neatly ironed dress and a costly pair of shoes her mother <i>bought</i> for her, all locked up in her father's cupboard. All the plans she <i>had</i> for the day <i>were ruined</i> and what vexed her most was the dance she <i>missed</i> at P.Y.C. where she had been given a special invitation by one of the organizers. It was going to be her last Christmas celebration in primary school and she'd planned to enjoy herself to the fullest with her friends.	21-22	had bought; had had; had been ruined; was going to miss;
The Christmas went sour for Mboh when her father returned from Yaounde where he <i>was attending</i> a seminar.	22	had been attending
Gwe took the third position out of a class of 60 pupils. Nene had an average pass; not so bad for her <i>and for the fact that she spent</i> some time sick in the hospital.	23	had spent
She told her father that their teacher <i>made</i> a mistake with her marks and she <i>left</i> the report card with him to correct the error.	23	had made; had left
I thought one of you <i>will</i> make the mistake	28	Would

to talk to her.		
...the man who owned the kiosk <i>said nodding</i> in confirmation to what Akung <i>said</i> . ... As the girls walked away, Mr. Doh the kiosk owner was reflecting on what Akung <i>said</i> .	29	had said; had said
While Akung was toiling for a better future, Amina was enjoying herself hoping that the future <i>will</i> take care of itself. tense	29	Would
One hour thirty minutes after Mboh <i>left</i> the Domestic science Center on that fateful day, she came out of a taxi in front of the post office and was so delighted with a five thousand francs note which the taxi driver <i>gave</i> her that, she slammed the door of the car and ran into the highway without looking right or left, just in front of an oncoming vehicle.	41	had left; had given
According to medical reports, Mboh had three months to stay in hospital. This meant she <i>will</i> not take part in the National day celebration.	45	would
It was Akung who told the small crowd at the door what <i>happened</i> and her story was confirmed by a next door neighbour.	37	had happened
As she was going, she knew her parents <i>will</i> be angry if they discovered that she went to dance mbolombolo.	33	would
At times she used to fear that Yaah <i>will</i> never get married, because of her radical views about life.	35	≈
...the discipline master called for her one day and warned her to be very careful else she <i>will</i> dismissed.	54-5	≈
If she was coming for money this time he <i>will</i> tell her to go to hell, he was thinking.	57	≈
If all doctors worked the way Dr. Otto was working, patients <i>will</i> have hope and many deaths, which occur because of negligence on the medical staff, <i>will</i> be averted.	62	would, by, would
This Doctor was just a few years her senior and Yaah wondered how <i>she made</i> it through at such a young age.	62	...she had made ...
Someone should not be begged before he or she does the work for which he or she	63	would



earns a salary. Some <i>will</i> abandon work until their names are sung on the radio.		
She had made up her mind to study medicine and a good pass in the required subjects <i>will</i> give her the advantage for easy ...	71	≈
For some time after that, each time they heard the sound of an aeroplane, they <i>will</i> say that their sister was coming back from Britain.	82	≈
When Yaah's mother first phoned the campus, she and her sisters begged the secretary to get someone to be around when the sad news <i>will</i> be revealed to the girl.	90	≈
However, it was agreed she and the family friends <i>will</i> attend Yaah's graduation due at the end of the year.	93	≈
That night she slept calmly and satisfied that she <i>did</i> just what her father <i>wanted</i> .	94	...had done just what her father would have wanted.
There was a man now in her life and in a few months she <i>will</i> be graduating as a medical doctor.	94	would
There she found herself consulting the aunt of the lady <i>she maltreated</i> in her hospital.	64	...she had maltreated...
The secret behind her [success] was the inspiration she <i>got</i> from Dr. Otto in the Abarkwa Regional Hospital many years ago when she was still a student in secondary school.	95	...had got ...before ...
She was wondering if the lady <i>recognized</i> her because all along she had been avoiding her eyes.	95-6	... had recognized
Dr. Y. Ndemah blinked at the mention of her father's death. If Mboh <i>was</i> looking at the medical lady, she should have <i>notice</i> a change in her eyes.	97	...had been looking ... noticed
"He is very understanding," Yaah said to the delight of Mboh who was looking as if she <i>will</i> burst with joy.	99	...Yaah said, to the delight of Mboh who was looking like she would burst with joy.

**Table 4:** Other Grammatical Errors in *A Challenge to Young Girls*

<b>Error</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Suggested correction</b>
The tyres of the Toyota screeched a heart rending sound on the road skidding off the road to the right and left before coming to a halt a few metres from where Mboh laid wriggling.	41	Wrong verb	...a few metres from where Mboh lay wriggling.
She was directed to a specialist in a village, there she found herself consulting the aunt of the lady she maltreated in her hospital.	64	Comma splice	...village. There, she found ... she had maltreated
Yaah wanted to be a good doctor, she knew what that will mean to her patients.	104	≈	...good doctor. She knew what that would ..
This book is dedicated to all my pupils, past and present from which I draw the inspiration and courage to tackle my literacy works.	1	Wrong relative pronoun choice.	whom
With her father, it was a different story. She, her brothers and sisters knew when it was not convenient for any of them to expose his or her childishness, this was when their father was at	22	Wrong pronoun choice	their
Mr. Mayingefeh was the first of the two class seven teachers to arrive the class.	13	Failure to master phrasal verb	arrive at
She had been doing that whenever there was roll call in the morning and on certain days she would leave the house and never arrive the center.	41	≈	arrive at
She worked so hard that after the G.C.E. was written she fell sick and was admitted in the hospital for two weeks.	62	≈	admitted to
She dreamt that she was admitted in a university in Pretoria, capital of South	74	≈	admitted to

Africa.			
Mr. Menyengefeh understood his agony and felt sympathetic for him.	24	Wrong collocation or vocabulary lack	felt sympathetic towards him or felt sympathy for him
When they play those their tricks on foolish girls, they easily succeed.	35	Mutually exclusive determiners	those
"...One of those your children can be the president of this country tomorrow," Inspector Safeh said ...	78	≈	those children or your children
"I am going to study medicine at the Glasgow University," she answered wishing the woman would stop talking to her in that her rapid way.	83	≈	that rapid way or her rapid way
Yaah sensed trouble and moved away. She knew Mboh was in a bad state and could start fighting her. God Forbid! A thing she had never done before. It was obvious to Yaah that for some strange reasons, Mboh did not like her and why should she hate me? She thought as she walked to their house. She had not been long in Victoria and wondered what she must have done to Mboh to incur her hatred.	7	Shift in person	her
She too could have been like Yaah if she didn't lost her way in life.	102	Wrong auxiliary verb	hadn't lost
*One Wednesday afternoon Yaah was standing at the door of their room wondering what to do for relaxation when she saw Coretta Coke, the Jamaican girl running across from the library where she had gone to read to the hostel.	89	Ambiguity	...Jamaican girl, running across to the hostel from the library where she had gone to read.
... she let go herself to be tossed up and down by men like a piece of coin.	102	≈	... tossed by men up and down like a piece of coin
The doctor who attended to her was a German volunteer	62	Indefinite article used instead of	...the young lady...

<p>serving with the Abarkwa Regional Hospital. She drew a lot of inspiration from a young lady, Dr. Otto as she was called.</p>		<p>the definite</p>	
<p>A girl standing next to Mboh vomited twice and was looking so weak.</p>	<p>68</p>	<p>'so' is not an adverb</p>	<p>very</p>
<p>She must have taken after her mother except that she was a talkative while her mother spoke very little.</p>	<p>73</p>	<p>Unnecessary article</p>	<p>..her mother was talkative.../ her mother was a talkative person</p>
<p>She put down her head and remained quietly like that.</p>	<p>93</p>	<p>No comparison present</p>	<p>...in that position.</p>
<p>Some of them are victims of circumstance.</p>	<p>100</p>		<p>circumstances</p>
<p>Yaah's meeting with her classmate kept her thinking all afternoon of the essence of life she saw in Mboh's life and hers the practical application of Horace Walpole's theory which states that; 'The world is a comedy to those who think and a tragedy to those who feel.'</p>	<p>103</p>	<p>No mastery of reported and direct speech</p>	<p>...all afternoon about ...Mboh's life and hers, the practical application...which states that the world ... who feel.</p>

*Punctuation*

Punctuation errors similar to those in *Manka'a* are found in *A Challenge for Young Girls*. There are lots of obligatory commas missing, as can be seen in two examples already listed above. These have been marked with an asterisk. More examples of punctuation errors are listed in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Punctuation Errors in *A challenge to Young Girls*

<b>Error</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Error type</b>	<b>Suggested correction</b>
<p>"That is a very progressive way of looking at life my daughter."</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>Vocative not separated</p>	<p>...life, my daughter</p>
<p>You make me laugh my brother I don't</p>	<p>78</p>	<p>≈ and run-</p>	<p>...laugh, my</p>

know why God gave me such dull children.		on-sentence	brother. I don't know...
"You will be alright again my boy."	96	Vocative not separated	"...again, my boy"
Thought[s] of her friend and classmate Yaah brought tears into her eyes.	102	≈	...classmate, Yaah, brought tears...
Some parents are never at home, this gives the children the freedom to do whatever they want.	40	Comma splice	...at home. This gives...
She knew her father was aware of her dealings with men, this bordered her so much because she could not easily trick him as she did to her mother.	49	≈ and Grammar	...with men. This bordered her very much. . as she did her mother.
"Yaah, you are going to college, you are getting into the world now. ..."	52	Comma splice	...college; you are getting...
*She was directed to a specialist in a village, there she found herself consulting the aunt of the lady she maltreated in her hospital.	64	≈	...in a village. There she found...
Yaah wanted to be a good doctor, she knew what that will mean to her patients.	104	≈	...doctor; she knew...
The driver of the vehicle saw the danger and stamped his foot on the brakes while working skillfully on the steering. The tyres of the Toyota screeched a heart rending sound on the road skidding off the road to the right and left before coming to a halt a few metres from where Mboh [lay] wriggling.	41	Adverbial clauses not punctuated	...the brakes, while ... ...the road, skidding off ...
"I know policemen have no manners," Neh said to her husband jokingly as she cleared the table.	52	Adverbial not separated	...husband, jokingly, as ...
"I haven't," Mboh replied to the embarrassment of the students who came to see her off.	56	Adverbial clause not punctuated	...Mboh replied, to the embarrassment...
One of the two girls stood as if she was going to collapse while her friend picked up courage and asked ...	56	≈	...going to collapse, while her friend...
... Mr. Dohfeh replied amused by the girl's question.	66	≈	...Dohfeh replied, amused by the...
"I have taken care of that," Dr. Ndemah said bringing out a letter from his hand bag.	94	Adverbial - ing clause not separated	...Ndemah said, bringing out...

		ed	
...a pregnant lady walked in carrying a child of about two years old.	95	≈	...walked in, carrying a child...
It was then that she realized the good her father had been doing to her trying to beat sense into her.	101	≈	...doing to her, trying to beat sense...
Others had done it and why not herself.	50	2 parallel clauses involving a kind of comparison need a comma	Others had done it, and why not herself?
For her parents it was a thing to celebrate.	50	Verbless clause not separated	For her parents, it was
She was the senior prefect of the college and captain of the handball team as well as president of their science club.	62	≈	...handball team, as well as president...
"My leg is not the problem at the moment." She sobbed.	45	Wrong direct speech punctuation	...moment," she sobbed
"Meaning what now." Came the harsh response ...	57	≈	"Meaning what now?" came the harsh response
Some die-hards who do not want to give up their indiscriminate love affairs call AIDS an American ploy to discourage sex or cut down world population particularly that of Africa.	60	Non-restrictive appositive not separated	...world population, particularly that of Africa.
She met a lot of people from different parts of Africa including some Cameroonians surprisingly.	86	≈ and adverbial not separated	...of Africa, including some Cameroonians, surprisingly.
..., the youths particularly the girls would have been so hard hit.	100	Non-restrictive appositive not separated	...the youths, particularly the girls, would have...
The two doctors, Dr. Ndemah and Dr. Yaah Ndemah now husband and wife finally returned home after working for two years at a clinic in Glasgow after Dr. Yaah Ndemah's graduation as a doctor from the Glasgow University.	94	Incomplete punctuation of non-restrictive apposition + adverbial not separated	...husband and wife, finally returned... In Glasgow, after Dr. Yaah...

		ed	
"...Since we met last time I haven't seen my period." Mboh said studying Yemeh's face.	57	Wrong direct speech punctuation	"...my period," Mboh said, studying Yemeh's face.
"Okay, I want Yaah to become a banker, if that is the way you people want to talk." Yaah's aunt, Longbue who was working in the bank said.	51	≈ and non restrictive relative clause not punctuated	"...want to talk," Yaah's ... Longbue, who was working in the bank, said.
She was the only student from Victoria in that college, and had to make new friends though she was careful about the kind of friends she made.	52	Misplaced comma	...in that college and had to make new friends, though she ...
AIDS she said had no cure unlike other sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhoea and syphilis which were easily treated.	53	Medial reporting statement not separated	AIDS, she said, had no cure...
But there is something you must realize a woman without a man is like a house without a roof or a tree without branches.	65	Run-on-sentence	...you must realize: A woman...
"I know you know me to be a very good teacher that is why you probably want me to remain a teacher all my life. ..."	66	≈	"...good teacher. That is why..."
Yaah registered nine papers in the O/L, had three 'As', four 'Bs' and two 'Cs'.	74	Omission of plural marker	...three A's, four B's and two C's.
"The rate at which you read, nothing can be above you," Ngieh, her cousin stated.	80	Incomplete punctuation	...Ngieh, her cousin, stated.
Some of them drop out of school and remain semi-illiterates for life while others become mothers with a chain of children they cannot take good care of.	102	Missing comma before a coordinator of two long main clauses	...semi-illiterates for life, while others...

When I came across some of the punctuation and spelling errors in *A Challenge to Young Girls*, I thought they may be simply typographical. If this is the case, then good proof-reading of the work was not done by the publisher. Below is a list of these errors.

**Table 6:** Possible Typographical Errors in *A Challenge to Young Girls*

Error	Page	Suggested correction
"Mboh, I that the way you behave or don't you want me to talk to you?"	7	"Mboh, is that the way...?"
"I beg, is don't have time to talk to people and it is none of your business ..."	7	"I beg, I don't have time..."
"The day I will see a woman with a bucket of faece on her head then I will accept that what a man can do a woman can also do"	51	"...faeces... can also do."
At the head of the Institution, was Sister Margaret Mary, an educationists and ...	54	...of the Institution was Sister Margaret, an educationist and...
Are you sick? The woman asked very concerned.	56	"Are you sick?" the woman asked, concerned.
"I am as blank in the subject as you are? I hear there are dream books ..."	76	"...as you are. I hear..."
"Safeh, you are urgently wanted in the secretariat Come."	89	"...the secretariat. Come."
"...The man was working in Ghana at the time but now they are working in Cameroon?" Yaah replied.		"...in Cameroon," Yaah replied.

"Cameroon English" is a variety of English that is nationally and internationally recognized. That is probably why a renowned publisher like Mouton de Gruyter has included Cameroon English as one of the varieties of English in the world in his handbook of English varieties (2005, 2008). In *Manka'a*, there are examples of Cameroon English usage as far as vocabulary is concerned. For example, on page 13, Mr. Ayuk tells Manka'a: "You are like my last follower," "last follower" meaning "youngest junior sister" or "youngest sibling." On page 11 of *A Challenge for Young Girls*, Yaah says, "... Why should somebody be angry because I am brilliant? ... This is wonderful O." Her mother replies, "This is our wonderful world, my daughter." The word "wonderful" is used here to



mean “terrible” in Standard British English. In Cameroonian English usage, “wonderful” for “terrible” is common.

## **Conclusion**

First, the question to be asked is whether basic grammar and punctuation rules of Standard English can be waved in Cameroon national literature. I would think not, since this standard is taught (or is supposed to be taught) in schools in the country. Therefore emerging writers need to pay attention to the standard of English in their writings, especially writings which are intended to be used for the teaching of literature in schools. On the other hand, if the rules are to be ignored, then students should not be penalized during the marking of their scripts, be it during class tests, promotion examinations, or official examinations like the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination. Is that acceptable? Secondly, I am questioning whether literature teachers call the attention of their students to these errors and correct them during lessons, or they simply ignore them. Are the teachers themselves aware of these errors?

Cameroonian publishers seem not to be doing a good job as far as editing is concerned. They need to get good editors—specialists in the field—and pay them well enough to do their work efficiently. Writers themselves should also assure adequate proof-reading of their works before sending them to publishing houses.

Finally, how books are selected to be placed on the official list of books authorized for school use in Cameroon is questionable. What are the criteria for book selection? Do those who select the books actually read through them first to find out their suitability for the various subjects and grades of

students they are to be used for? Young Cameroonians deserve better quality than what is being offered to them at present in terms of books for literary studies.

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