Some Aspects of Cameroon English Prosody

Jean-Paul Kouega

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Introduction

This study examines the prosodic features of Cameroon English, which subsumes stress, intonation and tone. The data are drawn from two phonic sources, namely the spoken media and informal and formal conversations among educated members of the community including teachers, journalists, priests, medical doctors, politicians and other such highbrow people looked up to by the general public as proficient language users. The study begins with an overview of the language situation in Cameroon (1). This is followed by a description of stress (2), intonation (3), and tone (4).

1—Language situation in Cameroon

Cameroon, a Central African country, shares a border with four French-speaking countries (Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon), one Spanish-speaking country (Equatorial Guinea) and one English-speaking country (Nigeria). The territory was colonised by the Germans, who established German administration as from the year 1884. This administration was interrupted after the First World War when the country was shared between the victors of the war, namely France and England. These two powers were later mandated by the League of Nations and the UNO to develop and administer their respective share. In 1960, the French part of Cameroon became independent, and in 1961, this French part and the southern English part reunited as they were in the German period, while the northern English part decided to join Nigeria. The first government of the united Cameroon adopted both French and English as the official languages of the country.

Besides these two official languages, there is one widespread lingua franca called Pidgin English, which was made up in the English part of Cameroon to facilitate trade between the English and their native collaborators. This language is a mixture of some basic features of

standard English and some elements from various languages, including Nigerian Pidgin English. Other languages for out-group communications in the country such as Fufulde, Ewondo, Duala and Arab Choa are spoken in limited areas within the French-speaking part of the country. All other languages in the territory are codes for in-group communications. An early count of these languages revealed a total of some 236 (Dieu *et al.*), but more recent studies are putting forward the figure of 248 indigenous languages spoken by an overall population of around 12 million people (1991 national census), of which some twenty per cent or more are English-speaking.

These English-speaking Cameroonians acquire the languages they speak in approximately the same order: they first pick up one indigenous language and Pidgin English at home; then comes Standard English in formal education and much later, French. This pattern is slightly modified in most urban centres, where Pidgin English tends to precede—and occasionally supplant—the indigenous languages. As standard English is learnt formally in schools, non-educated people are left with Pidgin English for out-group communications. Actually in Cameroon, there is a continuum of English ranging from something close to mother tongue varieties to something quite distant from them. Sociolinguistically, four major types of English can be distinguished in the continuum, which can tentatively be labelled: Pidgin English, Pidginised English, General Cameroon English, and educated Cameroon English. These labels are taken up in turn.

Firstly, Pidgin English, which is the first language for out-group communications acquired by the vast majority of English-speaking Cameroonians, is spoken in both rural and urban centres, mainly by traders, labourers, farmers, houseboys and the like, who generally know only one other language, namely their mother tongues. Though widely used in the country, this lingua franca has "unofficial status and very low prestige" (Mbangwana) even among its major speakers, who tend to rate English high. Secondly, Pidginised English is more elaborate than the latter, though it still sounds strange to those who are not familiar with it. It is spoken by young job-seekers, especially primary school leavers and secondary school dropouts, most of whom get trained on practical jobs such as mechanics, woodwork, metal work, or set up small enterprises like shop-keeping and petty trade. The speakers of this type of English

have some education, as Penn shows; in fact they can write letters and read newspapers, though with lesser understanding as the years go by.

Thirdly General Cameroon English is spoken by secondary school leavers and high school goers. The latter generally get employed in the Cameroon Civil Service, in the fields of administration (State clerks), education (primary school teachers), health (State nurses), or the Army (soldiers, policemen). This type of Cameroon English, which is associated in the country with educatedness, is characterised by the fact that its speakers generally need English in their routine activities, like, say, a policeman, who is expected to fill in forms and produce verbal and written reports in English. Lastly educated Cameroon English, referred to by early linguists as Standard Cameroon English (Todd), shares a great number of features with mother-tongue Englishes. It is spoken by the elite of the country who have been fortunate to enter higher institutions of learning like a university. Aspects of the written form of this type are examined by Abangma; the segmental features of its spoken form are discussed in Mbangwana (1987), Kouega (1991) and Bobda. The prosodic features of this type of English is the subject of the present study.

2 – *Stress*

Before we begin the analysis of stress, it is worth pointing out that, although English was adopted as one of the official languages of Cameroon, no specific variety was recommended officially as the model to follow. However, given the historical links between Britain and this colony, Cameroonians readily adopted British English as the standard to approximate. As Received Pronunciation, RP for short, is to date the most documented accent of British English, we shall carry out the analysis of Cameroon English, CamE for short, in relation to it.

Although there is no general agreement among linguists on the degrees of stress in English, there seems to be agreement that there are three significant types which are labelled lexical primary stress, lexical secondary stress and sentence stress. The first two, which are fixed as to position, are describable in terms of individual words, whereas the third is movable and is examined in terms of sentences and utterances. Primary stress, or main lexical stress, is generally placed on lexical words such as *'camera, a'ttentive*. Secondary stress, which is regarded by some linguists

as non-phonemic, generally occurs in polysyllabic words such as *,anni'versary* and compound words such as *'income ,tax*. Lastly sentence stress, which is not fixed, can fall on any element of an utterance depending on the meaning the speaker wants to convey. A four-word utterance like "they stole the book" can receive sentence stress on any of its elements, in which case different shades of meaning are conveyed. To illustrate these meanings, contrastive sentences can be used, like the following:

- THEY stole the book (and not WE);
- They STOLE the book (they didn't pick it on the way);
- They stole the BOOK (not the table).

To better account for stress phonemes in this variety, we shall consider in turn lexical words (which are broken down into simple words, compound words, and forenames) and whole utterances. Let us examine simple words first. A simple word is understood here as a one-word lexical item, like the words *native*, *consequence*. Although many simple words are pronounced in Cameroon English as in other varieties of English, a good number of them are stressed in a conspicuous way. Some receive stress much earlier than expected while others receive it much later. Backward shift of primary stress is observed in many words, like those in the table below, which are stressed in the same way by most people:

Words	RP	CamE
research	re'search	'research
opponent	o'pponent	'opponent
democratic	demo'cratic	de'mocratic
recommendation	recommen'dation	re'commendation

Forward shift of primary stress, by far the most frequent type, is characterised by the placement of stress one or two syllables ahead of its position in RP. Stress is systematically shifted to the next syllable in words such as *challenge*, *hospital* and others in Set (A) below. It is shifted two syllables ahead in words like *operate*, *liberalise* and others in Set (B) below:

Words	RP	CamE
(A)		
challenge	'challenge	cha'llenge
hospital	'hospital	hos'pital
compensatory	com'pensatory	compen'satory
argumentative	argu'mentative	argumen'tative
(B)		
operate	'operate	ope'rate
clandestine	'clandestine	clandes'tine
television	'television	tele'vision
liberalise	'liberalise	libera'lise

Although these stress shifts are widespread, it is difficult to work out the rules governing their application. Word class and word length are irrelevant: stress shifts apply to words of all classes including prepositions like *unlike*, *in spite* and conjunctions like *however*, *whenever* which are stressed on the first syllable; they apply to words of various lengths like the two-syllable word *challenge* and the five-syllable one *argumentative* already cited above. One factor which seems to have a direct bearing on stress shifts is word-endings. Certain suffixes tend to attract stress to themselves, such as -ate- (celebrate), -ee- (jubilee), -ise- (*liberalise*), -ine- (*clandestine*). Other suffixes shift stress to the preceding syllable like -ism- (*alcoholism*), -ory- (*migratory*), -ive- (*tentative*) and -ary- (*disciplinary*). These two classes of suffixes are brought together in Sets (A) and (B) below:

Words	RP	CamE
(A)		
celebrate	'celebrate	cele'brate
jubilee	'jubilee	jubi'lee
liberalise	'liberalise	libera'lise
clandestine	'clandestine	clandes'tine
(B)		
alcoholism	'alcoholism	alco'holism

migratory	'migratory	mi'gratory
tentative	'tentative	ten'tative
disciplinary	'disciplinary	disci'plinary

The last class of simple words is polysyllabic words having both a primary and a secondary stress. In such words, the secondary stress is pronounced so forcefully that the words seem to have two primary stresses of equal weight. This is common with radio announcers, who as Lado observed, "often increase secondary stress to the level of primary stresses and thus multiply the number of attention peaks in the delivery" (29). In Cameroon English speech, this does not occur only in media discourse; it occurs in most discourse types, including informal interactions. Here are a few illustrations of words which have two primary stresses of equal weight:

Words	**RP**	**CamE**
disconnect	,discon'nect	'discon'nect
continental	,conti'nental	'conti'nental
anniversary	,anni'versary	'anni'versary
responsibility	res,ponsi'bility	res'ponsi'bility

Let us now consider the next class of words, namely compound words. Generally each element of a compound word retains its primary stress, as can be illustrated by the words *loaf sugar*, where primary stress is applied to both the first and the second component. In Cameroon English speech, this pattern is extended to most compound words whereas in RP, some words receive primary stress on the first component and secondary stress on the second, like those of Set (A) below, while other words take the reverse process like those in Set (B) below:

Words	**RP**	**CamE**
(A)		
income tax	'income ,tax	'income 'tax
stock exchange	'stock ex,change	'stock ex'change
fire place	'fire ,place	'fire 'place
house wife	'house ,wife	'house 'wife

(B)		
above-mentioned	,above 'mentioned	a'bove 'mentioned
,good neighbourliness	,good 'neighbourliness	'good'neighbourliness
first lady	,first 'lady	'first 'lady
ill-gotten gains	,ill-gotten 'gains	'ill-'gotten 'gains

As these examples show, most compound words in Cameroon English take even stress, that is they receive primary stress on each component. This does not mean that uneven stress does not exist in this variety. It must be admitted that compounds containing a primary stress followed by a secondary stress like *income tax* above are non-existent in the speech of Cameroonians. However compounds with secondary stress on the first component and primary stress on the second as in the RP rendition of the word *first lady* above are very common, as can be illustrated by the words below. Needless to say that such renditions sound strange to other speakers of English.

Words	RP	CamE
firewood	'fire,wood	,fire'wood
grammar school	'grammar ,school	,grammar 'school
lip stick	'lip ,stick	,lip'stick
sugar cane	'sugar ,cane	,sugar 'cane

Let us now consider the last class of lexical words outlined above, namely forenames. This class of words is special in that it is characterised by a systematic forward shift of stress. This pull of stress is so pronounced that lexical items which function both as common words and forenames are stressed differently. As common words they are stressed as expected, but as forenames they are stressed one or two syllables ahead of the stressed syllable in RP. Here are a few illustrations:

Common words in RP and CamE	Forenames in CamE
'comfort	Com'fort
'patience	Pa'tience
'promise	Pro'mise
'unity	U'nity

There is no obvious reason why forward shift of stress is so consistent in Cameroon English speech. However, an observation of a sizeable sample of data shows that forenames which co-exist in both French and English tend to be accented on the same syllable as in French, like the name *Alice* below. It is also observed that some suffixes tend to influence stress.

Some shift stress to the preceding syllable, like the suffix -is- as in *Precedis*, and -us- as in *Alphonsus*. Others pull stress to themselves, like -ine- as in *Catherine*. These are illustrated below:

Words	RP	French	CamE
Alice	'Alice	A'lice	A'lice
Agatha	'Agatha	A'gathe	A'gatha
Christopher	'Christopher	Chris'tophe	Chris'topher
Fidelia	-	Fi'dèle	Fi'delia
Precedis	-	-	Pre'cedis
Vitalis	-	-	Vi'talis
Alphonsus	-	Al'phonse	Al'phonsus
Nazarius	-	-	Na'zarius
Catherine	'Catherine	Cathe'rine	Cathe'rine
Gwendoline	'Gwendoline	-	Gwendo'line

Thus far we have been looking into stress in individual lexical words. Let us now take up stress in sentences and utterances. To begin with, sentence stress is hardly marked by purely greater articulatory force in the speech of most Cameroonians. These speakers generally resort to complex grammatical structures to convey the shades of meaning expressed by sentence stress. Such structures include cleft constructions, contrastive constructions and reduplication, to name only these few. While the illustrations preceded by an even number below are preferred by most speakers, those with an uneven number, where sentence stress is indicated by capitalisation, are avoided:

1 – JOHN did it (simple sentence with greater articulatory force applied to the element JOHN).
2 – It is John who did it (cleft construction suggesting a focus on the word John, which does not receive greater prominence).
3 – They didn't PICK the book; they STOLE it (compound sentence where the focus on PICK and STOLE express a contrast).
4 – They didn't pick the book but they stole it (compound sentence where contrast is not perceived auditorily, but is indicated by the conjunction *but*.
5 – A WELL-dressed gentleman (articulatory emphasis on *WELL*).
6 – A well-well-dressed gentleman (reduplication of *well* to indicate emphasis).

Successive occurrences of primary stress in an utterance determine rhythm. In RP there is a tendency for the stressed syllables in phrases to come up at approximately the same length of time, irrespective of the number of syllables. RP is said to be stress-timed. This pull towards isochrony is distorted in Cameroon English where all lexical words as well as some grammatical words within phrases receive primary stress. Needless to say that the resulting speech is syllable-timed rather than stress-timed, like the following, from a TV news bulletin: "There is 'some 'hope that the 'wide 'spread of en'demic di'seases 'will be 'curbed in the 'Central 'African ,sub-'region." (Kouega: 1991 141)

After describing stress in Cameroon English, let us examine the effects of stress shifts on the segmental features of this variety and the possible causes underlying their occurrences. When stress is shifted from its normal position, the quality of vowels in words tends to be greatly modified. To illustrate this point, let us consider the following seven words, where stress is shifted backwards:

Word	RP	CamE
research	riː'sɜːtʃ	'risɜːtʃ
opponent	ə,'pəʊnənt	'ɔpɔnɛnt
democratic	dɛmə'kraetɪk	de'mɔkratik
umbrella	əm'brɛlə	'ɔmbrela
recommendation	rɛ,kɒmɛn'deiʃn	re'kɔmɛndeʃɔn
diploma	dɪ'pləʊmə	'di plɔma
semester	sɪ'mɛstə	'sɛmɛsta

As these transcriptions show, central vowels tend to be replaced by peripheral ones: this can be illustrated by /ɜː/ which becomes /ɛ/ in

research, and by /ə/ which becomes /ɔ/ in *opponent*, *democratic* and *umbrella*. Diphthongs are monophthongised, like /eɪ/ which becomes /e/ in *recommendation* and /əʊ/ which becomes /ɔ/in *diploma*.

Similar variations occur in words where stress is shifted forward, like the following:

Word	RP	CamE
petrol	'pɛtrəl	pe'trɔl
salad	'saeləd	sa'lad
maintenance	'meɪntənəns	men'tenans
migratory	'maɪgrətrɪ	mai'gretɔri
interpret	ɪn'tɜ:prɪt	inta'prit
clandestine	'klaendɛstɪn	klandɛs'tain
celebrate	'sɛlɪbreɪt	sele'bret

Here central vowels are replaced by peripheral ones: /ə/ becomes /ɔ/ in *petrol*, /a/ in *salad*, /e/ in *maintenance* and *migratory*. So does /ɜ:/ which becomes /a/ in *interpret*. In addition, certain monophthongs are diphthongised like /ɪ/ which becomes /ai/ in *clandestine*, while certain diphthongs are monophthongised, like /eɪ/ which becomes /e/ in *celebrate*.

But it should be noted that these variations cannot all be attributed to stress shifts. They do occur in contexts where stress is not involved, as shown in the studies of Bobda and Kouega (in press), where the major segmental features of this variety are outlined.

Turning now to the possible causes of these variations, it should be recalled that Cameroon is a linguistic melting-pot where English co-exists with a stream of some 248 indigenous languages, on which are superimposed two dominant languages of unequal status, namely French, the other official language, and Pidgin English, a widespread lingua franca.

These dominant languages tend to influence English considerably. Take the French language, where lexical words are

accented on the ultimate syllable. As French is widespread in Cameroon, most English words of French or Romance origin are stressed as in French. Here are a few illustrations:

English	RP	CamE	French
colonel	'kɜ:nəl	kɔlɔ'nɛl	colo'nel
catechism	'kaetɪkɪzəm	kate'ʃizəm	café'chisme
Catherine	'kaeθrɪn	kate'rain	Cathe'rine
plantain	'plaentɪn	plan'ten	plan'tain
facilitate	fə'siliteɪt	fasili'tet	facili'ter
diversify	daɪ'vɜ:sifaɪ	daivɛsi'fai	diversi'fier
attribute	ə'trɪbju:t	atri'bjut	attri'buer

As these examples show, stress falls on the same syllable in both Cameroon English words (Column 3 above) and their French equivalents (Column 4).

Like French words, Pidgin English polysyllabic lexemes are stressed on the ultimate syllable; consequently very few speakers of Pidgin English succeed in stressing an English word differently from its Pidgin English cognate. Below are a few words which exist in both Pidgin English and Cameroon English, and are stressed in the same way. Note that the spelling proposed here for Pidgin English words is not standard:

English	RP	CamE	Pidgin English
calendar	'calendar	ca'lendar	ca'lendar
ancestor	'ancestor	an'cestor	an'cestor
petrol	'petrol	pe'trol	pe'trol
alcohol	'alcohol	alco'hol	alco'hol
plantain	'plantain	plan'tain	plan'tain
wardrobe	'wardrobe	ward'robe	ward'robe
umbrella	um'brella	'umbrella	'umbrella

As these examples show, Pidgin English words (Column 4 above) which exist in Cameroon English (Column 3) are stressed on the same syllable. Another major problem is the fact that Cameroonians pick up the English language through the written medium. Apart from the international spoken

media such as the BBC or CNN, these users have no reliable spoken model of English to approximate. Generally, learners first come into contact with the written word, which they then read, keeping in mind the written form. This means that words whose pronunciation differs from their spelling will be pronounced as they are spelt, hence the usefulness of the term "spelling pronunciation." In fact, many words are pronounced in Cameroon English as they are spelt, as these common ones show:

Word	RP	CamE
family	faeməlɪ	famili
tortoise	tɔ:təs	tɔtɔis
tomb	tu:m	tɔmb
parliament	pɑ:ləmənt	paliamɛnt
naval	neɪvəl	naval
aren't	ɑ:nt	arɛnt
circuit	sɜ:kɪt	sikuit

Occasionally these words are not only articulated as they are spelt; they are also stressed as their spelling suggests. Compare for instance the word pairs *maintain/plantain*, *refugee/jubilee*, *admirable/desirable* whose endings are spelt alike and, expectedly, are stressed alike in Cameroon English:

Word	RP	CamE
maintain	main'tain	main'tain
plantain	'plantain	plan'tain
refugee	refu'gee	refu'gee
jubilee	'jubilee	jubi'lee
desirable	de'sirable	de'sirable
admirable	'admirable	ad'mirable

In summary, the position of stress in words tends to be shifted in Cameroon English, and these shifts, which originate mainly from interlinguistic factors, tend to affect the quality of vowels in these words, causing central monophthongs to be replaced by peripheral ones. The next section considers the prosodic feature of intonation.

3 – Intonation

Intonation refers to those pitch variations which operate on whole utterances. Although there is general consensus among linguists on this definition, there is however disagreement on the number and types of variations. As far as RP is concerned, some four significant pitch phonemes can be identified. Two of them are pure pitch phonemes, namely fall and rise and the two others are complex pitch phonemes namely fall-rise and rise-fall. All four can be illustrated with the following symbols placed on the utterance: "No !", which many linguists cite:

- fall: (\)	\No (a matter a fact statement);
- rise: (/)	/No (questioning, non-final utterance);
- fall-rise: (V)	VNo (expressing incredulity);
- Rise-fall: (Λ)	ΛNo (emphatic prohibition, scolding).

In the data, the fall is used to indicate the completion of an utterance, while the rise indicates non-final sentences in the news and interrogative sentences in conversations. The fall-rise, though scarce, occurs in initial adverbials, like the word *lastly* in the utterance: "Lastly, we visited the airport." The other complex pitch phoneme, namely rise-fall, is non-existent. What is relevant to us here is not whether an intonation pattern is used in the corpus, but how appropriate those which do occur are. In this connection, all intonation patterns are appropriate. However there are situations where they are mixed up. For example, a fall may be used when a rise is expected, as in this instance from the news, where a fall is placed on the word *magistracy*, (which incidentally is stressed on the wrong syllable). Such a mix-up generally occurs in grammatically complex structures, like the following:

> //The National Centre for Administration and Ma\gistracy/
> will hold its board meeting in Yaoundé to\morrow//. (Kouega: 1991 158)

Another problem observed is the choice of the wrong word as the nucleus of an intonation unit. This generally occurs in texts written to be read aloud. Such texts often contain grammatically complex structures, which may be segmented wrongly. When the tie that holds together the components of an intonation unit is cut off, there is bound to be some comprehension problems. Below are a few such structures, which are extracted from chunks of texts too big to be reproduced here; they are

complex noun phrases containing several modifying words. In reading these phrases and similar ones, the words underlined below were mistakenly chosen as the nucleus of these intonation units. This caused the nucleus word proper (which follows the slash here) to be shifted to the next intonation unit. Needless to say that such mistakes confuse the listeners:

> - (presided by) the National Lawn Tennis Fede/ration / president (General James \Tataw);
> - (was addressing) a meeting of the insti/tution's / board of \governors (in Yaoundé...);
> - (because of) the 9.5 per cent/rate / interest (which...);
> - (thus) the Defence De/partment / supplies (will run out...).(Kouega: 1991 156)

In short the patterns of intonation identified in Cameroon English are analogous with those found in other Englishes, though they are more restricted in use. These same intonation patterns are found in the other languages spoken in Cameroon, namely French, Pidgin English and the local languages, and are used in similar ways. This perhaps explains the limited number of flaws observed in the data regarding the use of intonation. It can therefore be posited that the multitude of languages spoken in Cameroon has got a positive impact on the use of intonation in the English of this country.

4 – Tone

By tone is meant those pitch variations which differentiate not whole utterances but individual words. Four types of tone are identified in the corpus, namely fall, rise, fall-rise and rise-fall; expectedly they are the same as the intonation patterns outlined above. These word level pitch phonemes occur in three classes of words in Cameroon English. The first class includes loans from Pidgin English, a widespread lingua franca; here are a few examples, where the sequence of tones in each word is indicated:

Word	Tones	Renditions	Gloss.
Okrika	fall/fall/ fall	\ɔkr\ik\a	second hand cloth
Akara	fall/fall/fall	\ak\ar\a	beans cake
Egusi	fall/rise/rise	\eg/us/i	melon seeds
malolo	fall/rise/rise	m\al/ol/o	herring

mimbo	rise/rise-fall	m/imb/\o	wine
Eru	rise/fall	/er\u	a type of vegetable
kwacoco	rise/fall/rise	kw/ak\ok/o	grated cocoyam

The next two classes consist of pet-names and vocatives. Pet-names are formed by clipping, and additionally some undergo suffixation. Full forenames are clipped, and what is retained may be a one-syllable word like *Be* for *Bertrand*, *Del* for *Delphine*, *Flo* for *Florence*, *Vi* for *Vivian*; it may also be a two-syllable word like *Ade* for *Adeline*, *Bene* for *Bernadette*, *Caro* for *Caroline*, *Doro* for *Dorothy*. Additionally some two-syllable pet-names undergo suffixation, like the standard names *Andy* for *Andrew*, *Paddy* for *Patrick*, *Betty* for *Elisabeth* and new creations like *Gaby* for *Gabriel*, *Christy* for *Christina*, *Prudy* for *Prudencia*. Monosyllabic pet-names have a characteristic falling-rising pitch which is auditorily similar to that already described above. Disyllabic pet-names also end in a fall-rise but additionally the initial syllable receives a fall like a matter-of-fact statement. Here are a few illustrations of each type:

Pet-names	**RP**	**CamE**
(A)		
Ben (Benjamin)	'Ben	B\/en
Chris (Christopher)	'Chris	Chr\/is
Flo (Florence)	-	Fl\/o
(B)		
Paddy (Patrick)	'Paddy	P\add\/y
Betty (Elisabeth)	'Betty	B\ett\/y
Doro (Dorothy)	-	D\or\/o
Augus (Augustin)	-	A\ug\/us

Vocatives are words denoting the interlocutor in a speech act, like *John, father, mister*. In Cameroon English, there is a sub-set of standard vocatives which are pronounced like the pet-names above. These include *dad, mum, daddy, mummy, auntie, uncle.* The monosyllabic ones receive the falling-rising pitch like their pet-name counterparts; so do the disyllabic ones and their counterparts. What is interesting about this sub-set of vocatives is that they are systematically pronounced as described above

even when they function as nouns. Hence the word *auntie* in these two sentences for example, is pronounced the same in most conversations:

- My auntie will be back soon. (noun)
- Auntie, how are my brothers? (vocative)

Below is tabled the renditions of these vocatives:

Words	RP	CamE
(A)		
dad	'dad	dVad
mum	'mum	mVum
(B)		
auntie	'auntie	\auntVie
daddy	'daddy	d\addVy
mummy	'mummy	m\ummVy
uncle	'uncle	\uncVle

As these examples indicate, tonal features, which are specific to the background languages of Cameroon, have permeated into Cameroon English. In fact a certain proportion of Pidgin words have tone attached to them; those of them which are borrowed by Cameroon English have entered this variety of English together with their pitch phonemes. Needless to say that when pitch phonemes are applied to known words such as *Betty, uncle, auntie* and others cited above, the resulting renditions sound strange to listeners who are not accustomed to them.

Conclusion

This study has examined some of the salient features of Cameroon English prosody. While stress generally occurs initially in RP, it tends to be shifted to the penultimate position in this variety. This forward shift of stress is systematic in certain word classes such as forenames and words ending in certain suffixes. Intonation patterns which operate at the level of the utterance, do not seem to pose any serious problems to most speakers, but intonation units are sometimes wrongly segmented in complex structures, which confuses the unaccustomed listeners. Tone

seems to operate in a significant way in certain classes of words such as Pidgin English loans, pet-names and vocatives; this phonemic use of pitch at word level is rare in other varieties of English.

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