

Irish Presence in Colonial Cameroon and Its Linguistic Legacy

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This paper describes the historical circumstances in which the Irish came and lived in the then British Cameroons between the end of the First World War and 1961, the year of independence of the territory; in broad terms this is the *colonial* period, in strict terms the years of *trusteeship* to Britain under the League of Nations, after the period of the German protectorate from 1884. The paper also highlights the aspects of language policy which can be traced back to the presence of the Irish in the educational and religious sectors, and more importantly the features of Cameroon English phonology which arguably had an Irish input. The description is preceded by a review of earlier foreign influences on English in Cameroon. This review of the earlier period is justified by the fact that features inherited from that period are still attested in Cameroon Pidgin English and/or Cameroon English, and are often in variation with those inherited from the Irish.

1. Survey of Foreign Influences on English in Cameroon

1.1. Early Foreign Influences in the Formation of English in Cameroon

Europeans of various nationalities, namely the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the Germans, the French, the Italians and the British, have plied the Cameroonian coast since 1472, the year of the supposed “discovery” of Cameroon by the Portuguese. These Europeans have been coming in turn as explorers, traders, missionaries or administrators. The diversity of foreign influences is clearly reflected in the lexis of Cameroon Pidgin English (CamPE), the oldest English-derived tongue in Cameroon. The literature (e.g. Mbangwana 1983: 79-91, after previous writers) often focuses on Portuguese-derived words like *pikin* (*child*, from Portuguese *piqueno*), *sabi* (*know*, from *saber*), *kaka* (*excrement*, from *caca*), *dash* (*gift*, *tip* from *dache*), and *palaba*, *palava* (*speech*, *con-*

ference, dispute, from *palava*). But other European languages have also significantly contributed to the lexicon of CamPE. For example, *boku* (plenty, much, many) from French *beaucoup* found in old forms of the idiom;¹ *man* (husband, or impersonal pronoun) from German *Mann* ('man').

1.2. Later Influences

1.2.1. African Influences

The greatest African influence on English in Cameroon came from the Krios of Sierra Leone. The Krios, it will be recalled, were the occupants of a settlement created in 1787 in present-day Freetown, Sierra Leone, made up of freed slaves from Britain, namely from Portsmouth, from Nova Scotia in Canada, from Jamaica (the Maroons), and from slave ships bound for America intercepted by abolitionists after the formal end of the slave trade. The new settlers spoke an English-based Creole, subsequently called *Krio*, a term eventually used to designate the speakers. The Krios became very influential in Sierra Leone, but also far beyond, and disseminated to various parts of West Africa, and sometimes farther, as preachers, teachers, traders and administrators. Quoting Fyfe (1956: 118), Todd (1982: 284) reports that, by the middle of the 19th century, Creoles could be found from Gambia to Fernando Po (now Malabo), and that, by the end of the century, they filled the government offices in Nigeria and were scattered as far away as the Cape of Good Hope. Todd further reports after Gwei (1966: 140-144) that when the Baptist Society of Britain established a mission station in Cameroon, 29 per cent of the missionaries were Krios, either directly from Sierra Leone, or via Fernando Po.

In the same vein, Holm (1989: 412) reports that, before the beginning of colonisation proper by the end of the century, the British government, having taken over all British trading settlements in West Africa in 1821, and having begun to expand and consolidate its control in certain areas, employed, in the majority as administrators, missionaries, traders and teachers Sierra Leonean Creoles rather than British-born subjects.

Sierra Leone's Fourrah Bay College was very important in the training of the initial "reservoir of fluent speakers" (Odumuh 1987: 24), who were going to spread English among the whole of West Africa, including Cameroon. Fourrah Bay College provided a centre for the training of teachers, administrators and evangelists as fluent speakers of English (*ibid.*).

It is of interest to note that much of the Krio influence did not reach Cameroon directly from Sierra Leone, but from Nigeria. This is first of all because many freed slaves from overseas as well as those from intercepted ships were of

¹ More convincing illustrations of the influence of French in the development of Pidgin English on the West African coast can be found in the fact that, in addition to *boku*, French-derived words like *bato* (French *bateau* 'ship') are attested in the Krio and Pidgin English of Sierra Leone and Nigeria, which do not use French like Cameroon.

Nigerian, and particularly of Yoruba origin. Prof. Ayo Bamgbose (pc.) notes in this connection that the first Yoruba lesson on African soil was not in Nigeria, but in Sierra Leone. When these Krios of Nigerian origin moved out of Sierra Leone, their preferred place of re-settlement was Yorubaland. From there, like the other Krios, they moved to other parts of West Africa, including neighbouring Cameroon, taking along not only the Bible and the teacher's and clerk's pen, but their knowledge of Krio, and its predictable influence on West African pidgins and more standard varieties of the English idiom. The Krio influence was mostly felt on the Cameroonian coast, namely around Victoria (present day Limbe) where family names like *Burnley* and *Martins* are borne till today by Krio descendants. Krio influence on CamPE, however, was felt farther hinterland, including the CamPE varieties and even some indigenous languages of French Cameroon, where words like *kasala*, *trɔsi*, *tem* (cassava, trousers, time) are fully integrated.

Later on, the influence of Nigeria on Cameroon English continued and increased, as the British part of Cameroon came to be administered from Nigeria during the time of British trusteeship. Cameroon mostly underwent the influence of Yoruba English in the west of Nigeria and of Igbo English in the east, an influence which was due to several factors. In addition to the Krio influence from Sierra Leone through the Nigerian Yorubas, Yorubaland exerted an influence on Cameroon English, because Lagos the capital of the Federation of Nigeria, from which Cameroon was administered, was situated in this region. Lagos was also a large seaport and an educational centre like Ibadan, also situated in Yorubaland, which hosted one of the first and the most prestigious universities in colonial West Africa. Many members of the Cameroonian religious, educational and administrative elite had either been trained in Lagos or Ibadan, or had worked there, or both.

The influence of Eastern Nigeria on Cameroon was due to the fact that, as an administrative region of the Nigerian Federation, the then British Cameroons shared their western border with the Eastern Region. Many Cameroonians crossed over to the Eastern Region of the Nigerian Federation for trade and education. The influence of Eastern Nigeria on Cameroon through religion, very important in colonial days, will be discussed later.

It should be added that in the colonial days Nigerians, mostly from the Yoruba and Ibo ethnic groups, held very important positions in the British Cameroonian clergy, in education and administration.

For an overview of major countries whose nationals have had an influence on the shaping of Cameroon English, see Map 1.

1.2.2. European Influences and the Place of the Irish

The non-British Europeans present in Cameroon in the colonial period included the Dutch, the French, the Germans, the Italians and the Swiss. They all held positions in different sectors including the teaching of English. The British set-

tlers migrated from different parts of the United Kingdom, but the Irish clearly dominated. Irish English is, therefore, arguably the native English variety which has exerted the greatest influence on the formation of Cameroon English in the colonial period. The Irish came to Cameroon through the Catholic Mission and its social works, under a number of organisations. These organisations included the Mill Hill Fathers, the Spiritans (Holy Ghost Fathers), the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary and the Killeshandra nuns. Names of Irish missionaries like Bishop Peter Rogan (after whom Bishop Rogan College in Buea was named), Father Thomas Burke-Kennedy and Bishop Joseph Ignatius Shanahan, whose achievements are further discussed below, are legend in Cameroon. It may not be irrelevant to mention that Prof. Loreto Todd came to Cameroon in the early 1960s as a volunteer and worked for the Catholic Mission. She taught in secondary and higher education for many years.

Many Irish missionaries came to Cameroon within the context of the Irish Missionary Movement, which held sway in Ireland in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Irish involved in this movement felt called upon, or were encouraged, to go abroad to preach the Word of God, in response to Christ's command "Go ye therefore, teach all nations" (Hogan 1990: 153). The Irish Missionary Movement was supported by a heavy propaganda machinery, which included religious magazines. Hogan (1990: 146) reports that "the appeal to Catholics carried out in the pages of the missionary magazines was a mixture of argument and exhortation, persuasion and encouragement," which presented the pursuit of religious aspirations as the "highest form of idealism" which "alone provides true satisfaction" (*ibid.*).

The missionaries, many of whom sacrificed everything, including their life, to the cause, were celebrated as heroes. Hogan (1990: 150) reports the following piece written on the departure of a group of missionaries for Africa in 1922:

We in Ireland who live in a period of heroism and self-sacrifice appreciate the grand motive which urged these five young apostles to deny themselves home comforts and Irish surroundings to bring to the benighted African Negroes a foretaste of the joys of heaven.

One of the celebrated Irish missionary heroes in Cameroon was Bishop Joseph Shanahan, who "came to Cameroon from Nigeria in 1918 and trekked 1000 miles to visit all the mission stations where the German priests had been before the beginning of the World War" (Anonymous 2004: 16).

One important motivation for the Catholic missionary action was the need to counter the threat of Protestantism and above all of Islam which had preceded Catholicism in Africa, and were therefore more firmly implanted. The Catholic missionaries had the task of saving the "pagan souls" from the "heresy" of Protestantism and the "abomination" of Islam (Hogan 1990: 155).

The geographical areas of predilection of the Irish missionaries included Africa, where the Irish gradually supplanted missionaries from the other European nationalities. In fact, Hogan (1990: 164) reports that, in 1957, there were more Irish priests deployed in Africa and Asia than Italians, Germans and Spanish, and "that Dutch and German totals were gradually overhauled." Hogan (*ibid.*)

further notes that “there were more Irish sisters than Dutch, Italian or Spanish, while French totals were already within range.” Hogan finally indicates that, by the early 1960s, the Irish missionary totals were higher than those of all the European mission-sending countries, and by the 1970s Irish totals were the highest in Europe. Specific statistics are not available for Cameroon, but it can safely be inferred that Cameroonian statistics reflect the general trends.

The most notable and one of the earliest of the missionary organisations was Saint Joseph’s Missionary Society, more commonly known as the Mill Hill Missionary Society. The Mill Hill missionaries arrived in Victoria (now Limbe) in 1922, after Germany’s defeat in the First World War, replacing the German Palatines who had been active in Cameroon since 1884.

Most of the early Mill Hill missionaries in Cameroon were actually Dutch, who did not use the Dutch language, but English. However, the majority of the native English speakers among the missionaries was Irish. Anglophone Cameroon owes a great deal of the early education and training of its colonial and post-colonial elite to the Mill Hill and other Roman Catholic missionaries. For example, the first primary school for boys in the British Cameroons to have the Standard Six class was Saint Anthony’s Primary School in Njinikom. In Standard Six, pupils sat for the then prestigious End of Primary School Certificate, and were absorbed as senior staff into various educational, religious and administrative positions. The foundation and development of the Njinikom Saint Anthony’s Primary School are associated with an Irish priest, Father Thomas Burke-Kennedy who opened the Babanki-Tungo station in 1938 (O’Neil 1990: 170). Father Burke-Kennedy stayed at Njinikom till he died, and was buried in the churchyard. One of the most notable products of Saint Anthony’s Primary School was the late Prof. Bernard Fonlon, a very influential figure in Cameroonian politics and university education. Bernard Fonlon obtained his BA, MA and PhD degrees from Cork (Ireland) and was the first Cameroonian to hold a PhD degree. He also obtained qualifications from Oxford and the Sorbonne. He became a cabinet minister in the early 1960s, later resigned and took up a teaching position at the University of Yaounde, where he became a professor of Literature and Head of Department of African Literature.

The first primary school for girls leading up to Standard Six at Shisong was also opened by the Roman Catholic Church. Many of the Sisters who taught there were Irish. The Shisong parish, like that of Njinikom, played a very important role in early education and evangelisation in the British Cameroons.

Other memorable Roman Catholic educational landmarks include Saint Joseph’s College, Sasse, and the Queen of the Rosary College, Okoyong. Saint Joseph’s College, Sasse, commonly known as “Sasse,” was the first secondary school for boys, opened by the Mill Hill missionaries in 1939. Many members of its staff were Irish. The Cameroonian elite trained in Sasse included several current and former cabinet ministers, leading academics, eminent lawyers, etc. The first secondary school for girls, also opened by Catholic missionaries, the Holy Rosary Sisters, was the Queen of the Rosary College, Okoyong, generally

known as “Okoyong,” in 1956. It was opened to ease the plight of the Cameroonian girls who, for their education, had been crossing to the Queen of the Rosary College, Onitsha, in Nigeria. Many of Okoyong’s teaching staff were Irish Sisters. Okoyong, the female parallel of Sasse, has produced Cameroonian personalities who have made a mark in their respective fields.

It is important to note, in addition to the earlier survey of Nigerian influence on Cameroon English, that a good amount of Irish influence through the Catholic Mission came through Nigeria. It came through eastern Nigeria where the Catholic Mission was well established, and was mostly staffed by the Irish (see, for example, Awonusi 1986). The missionary associations whose mission extended to Cameroon included St Patrick’s Missionary Society, the Killeshandra nuns, very largely represented in Iboland (Loreto Todd, pc.), and the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary. For example, the anonymous article in *Cameroon Panorama* (2004: 16) reports that the early Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary and their founder Bishop Joseph Ignatius Shanahan “traveled the roads from Ireland through Nigeria to Cameroon bringing with them the Gospel as well as sharing in the life of the people.” The travels of Cameroonians for missionary training among the Irish in Nigeria, many of whose cases are cited in O’Neil’s (1991) *Mission to British Cameroons*, are further evidence of the exposure of Cameroonians to the Irish through neighbouring Nigeria. Map 1 gives a comprehensive view of the major foreign influences on English in Cameroon from the Portuguese period to the 20th century, while Map 2 shows the Catholic missionary impact on the British Cameroons from 1922 to 1960.

Irish missionaries were involved in a wide range of activities including health, social welfare, handicraft. But this paper focuses on their impact on education, for the obvious reason of the link between school and the moulding of language. While education in French Cameroon was handled by the State, it was mostly the affair of the Church in British Cameroons. Wolf (2001) negatively perceives this phenomenon as the hands-off policy of the British government for which it was often blamed (e.g. by the League of Nations). But other authors perceive the situation as the result of an accepted distribution of tasks between the state and the Church (cf. Hogan 1990; O’Neil 1991; Shu 2000). For example, Shu (2000: 4), quoting the report of the UK Colonial Office to the League of Nations, explains that all schools were entrusted to the Mission Societies because they “are in a better position to develop discipline and character with aid of those moral ... sanctions without which all knowledge becomes harmful to the individual and a danger to the State.”

The above survey stresses the role of the Catholic Church in the provision of the education in Cameroon. The other churches were side-trapped, not only because they were not generally staffed by the Irish, but because the role of the Catholic Church in the establishment of schools was far greater. Recall the fact that the first full-fledged primary and secondary schools for boys and girls were founded by the Catholics, and that indeed most of the early Cameroonian intellectual elite graduated from these schools.

Note that a minority of Irish people also came to Cameroon under the Commonwealth, the British Council or as Protestant (namely Presbyterian) missionaries, or as members of staff of the Protestant schools. For example, D.H. O'Neil, the first principal of Cameroon Protestant College (CPC), Bali, was Irish and headed this school from 1949 to 1956.

2. Irish Linguistic Legacy

The Irish linguistic legacy in Cameroon includes elements of language policy but, above all, structural aspects of the English language as spoken in the country today.

2.1. Language Policy

Although there were, among the Europeans living in Cameroon in the colonial period, large numbers of people (mostly the Dutch, but also the French, the Germans, the Swiss, the Belgians), especially in the clergy, whose mother tongue was not English, English was, predictably, generally the language of administration. The use of English after the German period was not a new phenomenon, as this language is reported to have been widely used during the German rule. For example, Ze Amvela (1993) reports that English was used in court at that time in the settlement of disputes between German and British traders.

The colonial period saw the encouragement of local languages and Pidgin English, a continuation of the German language policy. The Germans are reported to have been doubtful about the Africans' ability to learn their language (Mazrui and Mazrui 1996: 273) and often preferred to promote the indigenous languages and Pidgin English, which they called "Neger-Englisch" ('Negro English') (Simo Bobda and Wolf 2001: 103).

The promotion of indigenous languages was in keeping with Lord Lugard's policy of *Indirect Rule*, whereby the British coloniser was to give the colonised some opening to Western civilisation, while at the same time preserving their cultures and traditions. The Bible and prayers (e.g. the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary) were translated into Pidgin English and other major local languages, notably Duala. Duala is the language of the Douala ethnic group in the French-speaking part of Cameroon. It had been adopted since the German period as the language of evangelisation in many parts of the present (English-speaking) South West Province, while Lamnso and Mungaka were adopted in the present North West. The fact that the Irish in particular rarely appreciated learning local languages (Hogan 1991: 163) did not affect the high status of these languages, which were more enthusiastically learnt by other Europeans (*ibid.*).

The Church today in Anglophone Cameroon basically pursues the same language policy as in British Cameroons, marked by the wide use, in addition to English, of local languages, but mainly of Pidgin English.

Pidgin English at the time was already (like today in many circles) shunned because of its feared negative consequences on English. O'Neil (1991: 89) cites an instance where one Inspector of Education in the Kom school reported that "the teachers wallowed in a morass of Pidgin" and indicated that Mgr Rogan "would prefer teaching to be done in 'High English.'" Because of its many advantages, Pidgin English, however, was eventually retained for religious teaching, a policy which continues to prevail today despite its lack of official status.

As for the indigenous languages today, there is a revival of enthusiasm after a drastic decline in interest in the first decades of Independence which was gained in 1960. This decline was partly due to the influence of French colonial policy inherited from the dominant Francophone part of the country and also due to the fact that the few efforts undertaken in terms of language policy are, as a priority for government, concentrated on French-English bilingualism.

2.2. *Structural Aspects of English*

It is an easy guess that the long Irish presence in colonial Cameroon must have left marks on Cameroon English. Although lexical and grammatical elements can be found in Cameroon English whose similarity with Irish English suggests the latter as the input, pronunciation provides more convincing evidence of the influence of Irish English on Cameroon.

Even if there were doubts about the use of Irish English on Cameroonian soil and its influence on the local speakers of English in the colonial period, such doubts would be dissipated not only by the testimony of the informants for this study, but also by some anecdotes. One such anecdote is about Father Aloysius Wankui who, in 1941, had been coached by Father Koster (Irish) in his learning of Latin in order to be given a place at the Onitsa seminary in Nigeria. At the end of a two-year Latin course which Wankui covered in six months, Bishop Rogan is reported to have joked that "He is already knee deep into O'Growneys' Irish Grammar, swatting up the Ulster, Munster and Leinster pronunciation of *bonus, bona, bonum....*" (O'Neil 1991: 82).

The pronunciations which can be regarded, in various degrees, as the legacy of the Irish presence in Cameroon, or may have at least been influenced by it, include the realisations of the NURSE, STRUT and SQUARE vowels, the /hw/ sequence, the pronunciation of <th>, and some syllable stress patterns.

The NURSE Vowel

The patterns of realisation of the NURSE vowel across African accents of English are /a, ε, ɔ/; e.g. east African [wak] *work*, southern African [wɛk], Ghanaian [wɛk], Sierra Leonean [wɔk]. These variants depend on a number of factors, which include the colonial input, the spelling and other factors which intervened in the process of the acquisition/learning of the language. CamE exhib-

its all of the three substitutes. The vowel /ɔ/ stands for <or, our, ur> as in [tɔk, wɔm, dʒɔne, kɔtesi, pɔpɔs, tɔn] *work, worm, journey, courtesy, purpose, turn*. The vowel /ɛ/, which tenses into [e] in some word-medial environments (Simo Bobda 1994: 181), characteristically occurs for orthographic <er, ear, ir, yr> as in [tɛm, pɛsən, lɛn, jɛn, fɛm, tɛd, mɛ] *term, person, learn, yearn, firm, third, myrrh*. The vowel /ɛ/ also occurs for <or, our, ur> in acrolectal speech, as in [wɛk, dʒɛne, bɛn] *work, journey, burn*, often in competition with /ɔ/. The vowel /a/ occurs only in a handful of words: *her* [ha], basilectal *Sir* [sa], (verb) *transf[a]r, s[a]rvant, mat[a]rnal, mat[a]rernity*.

There are strong arguments for Irish English (IrE) to have been the input for some of the common realisations of the NURSE vowel in Cameroon. The cardinal argument obviously is the similarity between CamE pronunciation and the IrE forms. CamE /ɔ/ for <or, our, ur> (also the West African mainstream pronunciation, as seen above) is a characteristically Irish feature. CamE /ɛ/ for <er, ear, ir, yr> roughly corresponds to the Irish pronunciation of most of the NURSE vowels, which is /ɛ, e:/ (Wells 1982: 421; Hughes and Trudgill 1987: 66).

Two realisations of the NURSE vowel in <er, ear, ir, yr> are clearly in competition in West Africa and correspond to the dominant historical input /a/ and /ɛ/. The vowel /a/ is firmly established in those areas, where the Krios (though present in the whole of West Africa) were most dominant, in Sierra Leone, where Krios settled on their return to the African soil, in Gambia, where another (smaller) settlement was created around Bathurst (present day Banjul), and in Western Nigeria, the preferred place of relocation of the Krios (mainly of Yoruba origin as indicated above). These three countries constitute the “Krio connection” (Simo Bobda 2003: 28). It is clearly established in the literature (e.g. Montgomery 1999: 8) that the 19th century Black immigrants to Sierra Leone provided /a/ as the input for the NURSE vowel with <er, ear, ir, yr>, saying, for example, [masi, savant] *mercy, servant*. The areas which underwent less Krio domination and more Irish influence, have mostly /ɛ/. CamE falls into the latter category.

The analysis offered here is not altogether new in the study of pronunciation variations in West Africa. Awonusi (1986: 550) already indicates that, in Nigeria, while /a/ for *learn* predominates in the west, /ɛ/ is more common in the east, being the legacy of the speech of the early Scottish teachers in Iboland. It can be added that, on the basis of the historical background provided above, the influence of the Irish missionaries in this area was at least as important.

While Nigeria is divided between /ɛ/ and /a/ for the NURSE vowel in <er, ear, ir, yr>, Cameroon has basically only /ɛ/. This feature can be attributed to the influence of the Irish or to the influence of neighbouring eastern Nigeria, itself influenced by Irish English. The almost total absence in Cameroon of /a/ so common in Sierra Leone, Gambia and Nigeria is very striking. The cases of [ha] *her* and basilectal [sa] *Sir* discussed above are the only real exceptions. The occurrence of /a/ in (verb) [trans'fa], in (noun) ['savant], [ma'taniti] and in (adjective) [ma'tanal] is arguably the result of vowel harmony with the neighbouring vow-

els. This explanation is supported by the fact that, in cases where /a/ does not occur in a neighbouring syllable, the NURSE vowel is not rendered as /a/. For example, Cameroonians say [má'taniti] but [juní'vɛsiti] *university* (not *[juní'vasiti]), [trans'fa] *transfer* but [pri'fɛ] (not *[pri'fa]) and, more significantly, [sáv] but [sev, sevis] *serve, service* (not *[sav, savis]).

Furthermore, consider the following sub-set of NURSE words with <ir, er>: *first, third, bird, person*. Each of the words has a distribution parallel to the above cases with regard to the dichotomy between those parts of West Africa where Krio influence was greatest, and the other parts, which include areas of Irish influence like Cameroon.

Like IrE, CamE has /ɛ/ for the following words: *first, third, bird, person* [fɛst, tɛd, bɛt ~ bɛd, pɛsən ~ pɛsin]. In areas where the Krio impact was greatest, /ɔ/ occurs with varying degrees of frequency: *first* has the highest frequency in Sierra Leone, in Nigeria (especially Yoruba English), and in Gambia, followed in decreasing order by *third, bird*, and less commonly *person*. The vowel /a/ tends to occur for all of the words in Nigerian Hausa English, and for *person* in Gambia. If we exclude /a/ in these geographical areas, we will notice that /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ are in competition in West Africa for the four words under consideration. The areas where /ɛ/ recurs include those with Irish missionary impact, while /ɔ/ is mostly common in the "Krio connection." Evidence that /ɔ/ in these words is attributable to Krio influence is that the Krio cognates of these words have /ɔ/, as is attested by Fyle and Jones's (1980) dictionary: *fɔs, tɔd, bɔd, pɔsin*.

Conforming with the distribution analysed above, CamE predictably has /ɛ/, normally exclusive in the standard CamE variety. *Fɔs* ('first') and variants like *fɔsi* occur only in some basilectal and/or older forms of Cameroon Pidgin English, being presumably a Krio residue.

The final illustration of the likely influence of the Irish on the pronunciation of the NURSE vowel in CamE is, interestingly, the word *nurse* itself, whose common realisation is [nes]. This corresponds to what Wells (1982: 419) reports to be the Irish pronunciation, where /ɛ/ is in variation with /ʌ/. CamE /ɛ/ for *nurse* contrasts with /ɔ/, which is, as we have seen earlier, the mainstream realisation of most other NURSE words in <or, our, ur>.

The STRUT Vowel

The STRUT vowel has the following five realisations in Africa: /ɔ, a, ɛ, u, au/. Factors determining the occurrence of a substitute include the colonial input, spelling, and the analogy with a common form. The vowel /ɔ/ occurs in most of West Africa, except in Ghanaian English and Nigerian Hausa English in the north. The vowel /a/ typically occurs in Ghana, in Nigerian Hausa English as well as in east and southern Africa. The vowel /ɛ/ typically occurs in some words like *just, us* in Ghana, but also in acrolectal speech in some words in Nigeria (e.g. *but*) and in Cameroon (e.g. *but, cut*). The vowel /u/ occurs, induced by the spelling, in words like *buffalo, buttock, culprit* in many parts of West Africa. Right

across Africa, the vowel /au/ occurs in a large number of words with <ou> spellings like *country*, *southern*, *abundance*, *pronunciation* (the latter two pronunciations often influence, and are influenced by, the deviant spellings of **abundance*, **pronunciation*). They are induced by analogy with pronunciations like *count*, *counter* and *sound*.

The distribution of /ɔ/ and /a/, the two main realisations, largely reflects the colonial input and can, in the case of Cameroon, be associated with the Irish presence in the country. Already Jowitt (1991: 73) asserted that the influence of the Irish missionaries played a part in the realisation of the STRUT vowel as /ɔ/ in *love*, *money*, etc. in Nigeria. If we accept Jowitt's thesis, we can safely infer that CamE /ɔ/ for the STRUT vowel derives from the same source, given Cameroon's historical links with Nigeria on the one hand and the direct presence of the Irish on Cameroonian soil on the other. Awonusi's (1986: 550) and Harris's (1996) explanations of the occurrence of /ɔ/ in southern Nigeria, and in West Africa in general do not contradict Jowitt's thesis. According to Awonusi (*ibid.*), the occurrence of /ɔ/ in the south of Nigeria, contrasting with /a/ in the Hausa north, is due to the fact that the earlier British settlers in the south were not from the RP backgrounds of the south of Britain, whereas those who later settled in the north were. Harris's explanation is that, in general, West Africa has /ɔ/, contrasting with east and southern African /a/, because the British settled in these two parts of the continent at two different periods in the development of the STRUT vowel. At the time English was transplanted to West Africa, the STRUT vowel was still an /ɔ/-like segment, which eventually started fronting to /a/ later.²

It should be noted that the transplantation referred to was one yielding basically some pidginised form of English, since English proper was not to be used in on a large scale before the 20th century. At that period, while the fronting of STRUT was already in progress in the south of England, Irish English and many accents of the north of England still had, and have up till today, a rounded /ɔ/, which was taken to Cameroon by the Irish and was arguably reinforced by the /ɔ/ of the existing pidginised forms of English.

For a small number of STRUT words, CamPE cognates have /a/, a residue of their Krio cognates, as shown in Fyle and Jones's (1980) dictionary. These words include *come*, *one*, *wonder*, *wonderful*, *nothing*, *humbug*, corresponding to Krio *kam*, *wan*, *wanda*, *wandafu(l)*, *natin*, *hambok*. CamPE has the same forms, while CamE has /ɔ/ for *nothing* and *wonder* and its derivatives, and it varies between /ɔ/ and /a/ for *come* and *one*. The word *humbug* is heard mostly in its CamPE form. It would be interesting to investigate the source of /a/ for the subset of STRUT words shown here.

² Outside Africa, Harris's theory explains why the STRUT vowel is realised as /ɔ/ in most of the West Indies where English was transported to from the 16th century onwards, and /a/ in Asia where the British settled much later, i.e. at the end of the 19th century.

The SQUARE Vowel

In CamE, the SQUARE vowel is realised as /ɛ/ except in a handful of well documented words. These include *their*, which has /ea, eɛ, iɛ, ia/, *pear* [piɛ], words in *-aire* (e.g. *millionaire*, *billionaire*, *questionnaire*), *chair*, (occasionally) *share*, and (even less often) *where*, which may have /iə, iɛ/. A spelling-induced /a/ also occurs in words like v[a]ry and its derivatives as well as *Sarah*, *hilarious*, *nefarious*.

CamE /ɛ/ is a possible legacy of IrE, where Arthur and Trudgill (1987: 66) report *fair* and *fir* to be homophonous as [fɛ]. The quasi-systematic /ɛ/ for the SQUARE vowel in CamE (also a feature of Ghanaian English) contrasts with the equally frequent diphthongal sequence /iɛ, ia, eɛ, ea/ found in the “Krio connection” for *there*, *where*, *care*, *bare*, *bear*, *fair*, *fare*, *repair*, *prepare*, etc.

/hw/

Wh- words are rendered by some CamE speakers as [hw-]; e.g. [hwɔt, hwai] *what*, *why*. The same form exists in IrE (Wells 1982: 428), which could well have been the input.

TH

The major realisations of the TH sounds (RP /θ, ð/) across accents of English worldwide are /f, v/, /s, z/ and /t, d/. /f, v/, which occur in the south of England, namely in Cockney/Estuary English, are not normally attested in mainstream African accents of English. Realisations as /s, z/ occur in Nigerian Hausa English, but more typically in East Africa. CamE and most West African Englishes have /t, d/. This is probably not a random phenomenon and could be traced back to IrE. “The English stereotype of an Irish accent (‘brogue’) includes the use of /t, d/ instead of /θ, ð/ and/or vice-versa” (Wells 1982: 428).

Some Syllable-Stress Patterns

The CamE syllable-stress patterns which are reminiscent of IrE (Wells 1982: 436), Scottish English (*ibid.*, 414) and Northern English accents (Jones 1958: 143) include those of verbs in *-ate* and *-ise*: *adjudiˈcate*, *concenˈtrate*, *eduˈcate*, *exaggeˈrate*, *recogˈnise*, *reconˈcile*, *speciaˈlise*.

Like IrE, CamE lacks the Alternating Stress Rule (Chomsky and Halle 1968) which is responsible for pulling the underlying final stress of these words to the antepenultimate syllable, for (RP) *adˈjudicate*, *ˈeducate*, *ˈrecognise*, *ˈreconcile*, *ˈspecialise*.

Some General Evaluative Comments

The foregoing analysis undoubtedly triggers many questions, the answers to which are necessary to validate the claims made in this paper. The first question may be to know *which* IrE is considered here, since this variety of English, like any other, has developed and changed over the years. The Irish presence discussed here is that from the 1920s to the early '60s, which suggests that the IrE transplanted in Cameroon was contemporary IrE, broadly speaking, that described by Wells (1982), Hughes and Trudgill (1987) and others. A second question may relate to other factors in the formation of CamE. It is not claimed that the Irish input is the exclusive explanation for any of the features. For example, it is principally because /θ/ and /ð/ do not occur in Cameroonian languages that the TH sounds are realised as /t/ and /d/ which occur in the substratum languages. In some cases, the Irish factor may simply have been instrumental in consolidating the output of some *sui generis* rules, already found in the grammar of CamE. For instance, a stress placement rule in CamE assigns stress to the ultimate syllable in verbs ending in obstruents or strong syllables (Simo Bobda 1994: 279). The final stress in *-ate*, *-fy*, and *-ise* words is in keeping with that rule.

It is acknowledged, confirming the findings of an earlier study (Simo Bobda 2003) that there is a network of factors which contributed to the moulding of African English accents. For example, a given British accent may have arrived in Africa in several ways, namely directly, via the American continent or through a British route. The latter case is illustrated by Hughes and Trudgill (1987: 66) who report "large numbers of Irish people, especially from Southern Ireland, who settled in Liverpool over the last hundred years." Some IrE features found in Liverpool English (e.g. the realisation of the NURSE vowel with <er, ear, ir> as /ɛ/) reflect this movement of population, and could well have been exported to Cameroon through Britain.

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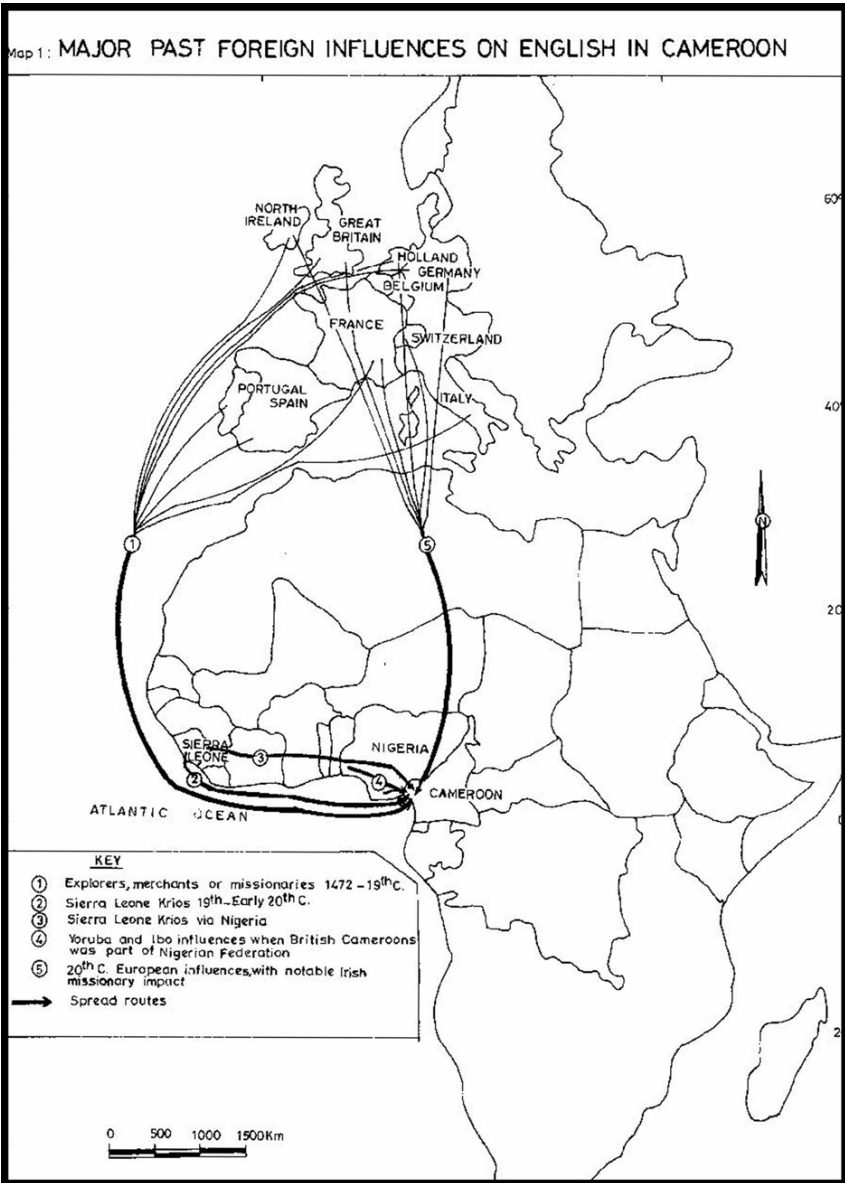
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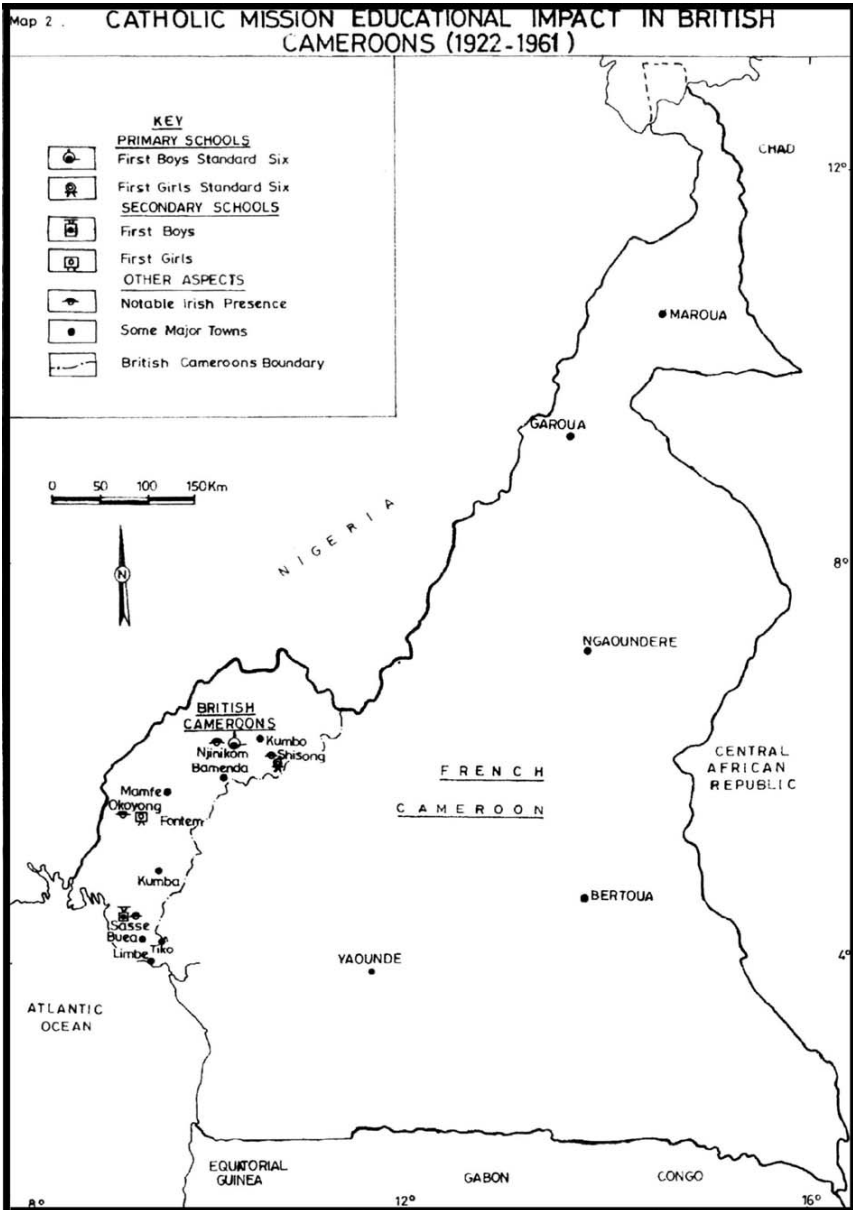
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Acknowledgements

I acknowledge, very gratefully, the contribution of the following people: Mr. Simon Awasum, who gave me valuable information on the colonial period in Cameroon, especially with regard to the work of missions; Mr. Victor Tarkang, who informed me on the Irish presence under the Protestant Mission, the Commonwealth and the British Council; Prof. Loreto Todd, who helped me with facts about the Irish in the colonial period, both in Cameroon and Nigeria; Prof. V. Fanso, Prof. Therese M. Tchombe and Dr. Herbert Igboanusi, who helped me in the search for documentation; Mr. Ojuku Tiafack, who drew the maps, and Mr. Oliver Jaff, who assisted with typing and formatting.





Source: conceived by the author based on information from Oneil, R.J. (1991) and one informant, Simon Awasum