

Is there indeed a Cameroon Francophone English?

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Abstract

For decades, research tradition in Cameroon regarded Cameroon English (CamE) as the sole legitimate and prestigious accent of English used in everyday (verbal) communication in the country. A significant paradigm shift has been observed in the last two decades, though. In fact, a sizable number of Francophones have embarked on the study of English and do use it on a daily basis. Cameroon Francophone English (CamFE), long regarded as an appendage to Cameroon English—what Kouega (1991) and Simo Bobda (1994) referred to as a performance variety of Cameroon English—, has reportedly developed and is still in the process of developing stable and distinctive features that mark it off from Cameroon English (Safotso 2012; Essomba Fouda 2013, 2022; Essomba Fouda & Atechi 2016; Atechi 2015; Simo Bobda 2013). This paper aims to discuss CamFE as a new variety of English that has cropped up in Cameroon. It adduces evidence in support of the existence and distinctiveness of this variety, and, most importantly, seeks to settle the dust raised by several attempts to clearly define the concept of CamFE.

Key Words: Cameroon Francophone English, Cameroon, Francophones, Cameroon English, Anglophones

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1. Introduction

That English and French are Cameroon's two official languages and that the country has two broad speech communities is nothing new. In effect, the country's present linguistic, and even political, situation owes very much to its political history full of ups and downs, and notably marked by more than one shift of colonial powers. There is apparently nothing one would properly discuss with regard to Cameroon's linguistic matters without taking even a cursory look at its political history. In a nutshell, one could say that present-day Cameroon is the product of French and British colonial influences, though the country is still battling to come to terms with this somehow derogatory perception of its sociopolitical arena.

Cameroon's linguistic landscape is known to be very rich and varied, with over 250 home languages (Ethnologue: 2005), one predominant lingua franca, Pidgin English, and two exoglossic languages: English and French, its official languages. Despite the 1961 reunification which saw the adoption of English and French as Cameroon's official languages and, more importantly, the adoption of the policy of official language bilingualism, English and French, for reasons too subjective and fuzzy to be considered in this paper, had basically remained the preserve of speakers from their respective speech communities.

This situation has been recently witnessing a tremendous shift in paradigm, though. The Francophones' spectacular rush for English which has been underway for over virtually two decades now has given rise to an English parlance that most scholars aware of this have concurrently termed Cameroon Francophone English—Kouega (2008) uses francophone English (francoE), but this collocation has not thrived in the literature; CamFE having proved more fashionable. Linguists almost unanimously agree that this parlance is different from the mainstream variety of English spoken in Cameroon: Cameroon English.

The legitimate questions, though, are to know if the so-called CamFE does really exist; if there are features common to its users, and, most importantly, who qualify as its speakers? Offering clear answers to these preoccupations is what we purport to achieve in this paper. From these answers, we will establish whether or not CamFE does exist as a variety with a set of features common to its speakers, and more importantly, answer the question of who really speaks this variety.

2. Background

A long-standing, linguistic and even social, tradition, following independence and the adoption of English and French as Cameroon's official languages, has considered English as a language meant solely for Anglophone

Cameroonians. This misconception doubtlessly buttressed linguistic theorising and conceptualisation. Certainly, early pronouncements on CamE owe very much to it.

In effect, most linguists who have ever had a say on the typology of English speeches in Cameroon have concurred to define CamE as the mainstream variety used by the Anglophone speaker with a minimum level of education of GCE/O Level. They also almost unanimously contrast it with other English-based parlances notably, Pidgin English and the hypercorrect form of Cameroonians having been exposed to British and/or American English (Kouega 1991; Simo Bobda 1994; Atechi 2006). The English of Francophones is only regarded incidentally as an appendage to CamE, a mere performance variety of it. Virtually all linguists from Cameroon and abroad have endorsed this nomenclature. Kouega (1999) is the sole scholar to have a different typology, as he introduces a new label he calls Pidginised English. It is not clear to us what he means by Pidginised English, though. Drawing a clear-cut dividing line between Pidgin English and Pidginised English would be labourious and otiose; such delineation would be of a split hair type. Knowing precisely which is which would be a real quandary. So, Pidginised English should simply be knocked off.

A more radical typology of English in Cameroon is perhaps that offered by Ngefac (2010) in which he agrees to the tri-label nomenclature regarded as traditional in the Cameroon linguistic arena, but, interestingly enough, chooses to completely ignore the English of Francophones. From every indication, this variety does not exist in his view, even in the form of a performance variety.

Obviously, attitudes vis-à-vis the English of Francophones regarded as a variety have been nothing favorable in linguistic practices until very recently. It once occurred to one of the authors of this chapter to enter into a heated debate with a University teacher at the University of Yaoundé I on this issue. He had gone to her for the endorsement of his PhD topic which, of course, centered on CamFE. On just reading the topic, she entered into a rage, saying that there was no such thing as CamFE; the only variety of English found in Cameroon is CamE. According to her, people should not seek by every means to impose something that does not exist. The author tried, by every means, to remind her of the notions of prescriptive and descriptive linguistics. He reminded her that language is tied to the twists and turns of both its context/setting of use and its users, and that the linguist's role is to observe this and account for it. That the differences between CamFE and CamE are observable in society and have so far been the focus of several scholarly articles and dissertations. Despite this plea, she threatened to fail him if she were to sit on his jury. This, obviously, was the most negative attitude a scholar could ever have towards a language variety in a scholarly milieu. It was full of subjectivity and, probably, political overtones. It may seem marginal and certainly anecdotal, yet it can well be a stark depiction of the social conscience of the time.

3. The rise of CamFE

No need to stress the point that such attitudes have been proved wrong by time and science. Erstwhile Francophones' attitudes to and perceptions of English have evolved significantly, and this has translated into their massive rush for English observed by Simo Bobda & Fasse Mbouya (2005); Simo Bobda (2013); Essomba Fouda (2012, 2013, 2022) and Safotso (2012). The least to be said is that these speakers' acquisition model differs from that of CamE speakers just like their daily verbal behaviour does (Essomba 2014a). Scholars are concurrent on the fact that CamFE has developed and is still in the process of developing stable phonological features that make it distinct from CamE. Evidence to be adduced in support of this view is available in the literature, and is presented in this paper. However, it is worth mentioning that in the present state of research, much time and energy have been devoted to phonology in the study of both varieties. Essomba (forthcoming) is the sole work at present which investigates CamFE from another angle: discourse style. So, evidence aimed at asserting CamFE as a variety on its own will exclusively be drawn from phonology, its best investigated area.

Despite the apparent lack of agreement amongst linguists to what CamFE features are, a global picture of its present state of description highlights the following:

a) - CamFE's vocalic system is less elaborate than that of CamE, with ten monophthongs, /i, a, e, u, ε, o, ɔ, y, œ, ə/, three diphthongs /ai; iə; ɪə/ and completely restructured triphthongs. Meanwhile CamE has eight monophthongs, /i, a, e, u, ε, o, ɔ, ə/, eleven diphthongs /ue, ɔi, ai, ua, ia, ie, iu, iε, ea, uε, io/ and fully restructured RP triphthongs. This is, in part, a logical outcome of its inability to distinguish between RP's vocalic pairs such as /i, i:/ and /v, u:/, or its systematic restructuring RP vowels.

b) - Restructuring of central vowels to peripheral ones as in the following table from Essomba (2014a: 83) summarises:

Table 1: Restructuring of RP central vowels in CamFE and CamE

RP Feature	Word	CamE Subs.	CamE	CamFE Subs.	CamFE
/ə/	Peter, attain	/a/	/pita/, /aten/	/ə/	/pita/, /ə'ten/
	sentence, parted	/ε/	/gəvenmen/, /partet/	/ε/, /i/	/gəvenmen/, /partit/
	police, impression	/ɔ/,	/pəlis/, /imprefən/	/ə/, /ɔ/	/pəlis/, /pə'lis/, /imprefə'n/
	Parliament	/ia/	/paliamen/	/ia/	/paliamen/
	The	/e/	/de/	/ə/	/də/
/ɜ/	Her, interpretation	/a/	/ha/, /intapritefən/	/œ/	/hœ/, /intœpritefə'n/
	Attorney	/ɔ/	/atəni/	/œ/	/ə'tœni/
/ʌ/	couple, just, cover	/ɔ/	/kəpl/, /dʒəst/, /kəvə/	/ɔ/	/kəpl/, /dʒəst/, /kəvə/

It should, however, be noted that this substitution process is function to the phonological environment in which the sound thus involved is found. So, RP /ə/ could be CamFE's /ə/, /ia/, /ε/ as in /pita/ and /parliament/. It may be posited that /ia/ in *parliament* is suggested by orthography just like /ε/ in *government* is.

c) - A quasi inexistence of diphthongs. Almost all diphthongs are reduced to monophthongs as shown below:

Table 2: Restructuring of RP diphthongs in CamFE and CamE

RP Feature	Word	CamFE Subs.	CamFE	CamE Subs.	CamE
/eɪ/	take,	/e/	/tek/	/e/	/tek/
	Rapist	/a/	/rapist/	/e/	/repist/
/əʊ /	Going	/o/	/goiŋ/	/o/	/goin/
	Focused	/o/	/fokəst/	/ɔ/	/fəkəst/
/aʊ/	allow, outcome	/o/, /ɔ/	/ə'lo/, /ətəkəm/	/aɔ/, /a/	/alaɔ/, /atəkəm/
	About	/ɔ/	/ə'bət/	/aɔ/	/abaɔt/
/iə/	realised, clear, era	/ir/, iə', /ε/	/jirs/, /kliə', /εrə/	/iε/, /ia/, /ε/	/jies/, /klia/, /εrə/
	behaviour, near	/iə'/	/biheviə', /niə'/	/iɔ/, /iε/	/biheviɔ/, /niε/
/oə/	ambiguous	/uə/	/ambiguəs/	/uə/	/ambiguəs/
	Curious	/iə'/	/kyriə's/	/iɔ/	/kuriɔs/
/aɪ/	Item	/ai/	/aitem/	/ai/	/aitem/
/εə/	Bare	/ε/	/be/	/ε/	/be/
	Mary	/e/	/meRi/	/e/	/meri/

d) - A systematic restructuring of triphthongs to /V+jə/ or /V+jɜ/. In native varieties of English, notably RP, triphthongs are regarded as one vowel sound that glides into three successive sounds standing as one speech unit. Though drawings of vowel trees display them as Nucleus 1, 2, and 3, most phoneticians concur that they correspond to a speech segment in much the same way as monophthongs and diphthongs. In CamE and CamFE though, RP triphthongs witness an interesting restructuring process as summarized in the table below:

Table 3: Restructuring of RP triphthongs in CamFE and CamE

Feature	Word	CamE Subs.	CamE	CamFE subs.	CamFE
/eɪə/	<u>Prayer</u>	/eja/	/preja/	/ejə/	/prejə's/
/aʊə/	<u>hour, shower</u>	/a/or /awa/	/a/, /awa/, /ʃawa/	/awə/ or /oə/	/awə/, /ʃoə/
	<u>Power</u>	/a/or /awa/	/pa/, /pawa/	/awə/	/pə/, /pawə/
/aɪə/	<u>Trial</u>	/aja/	/trajal/	/i/ or /ajə/	/trɪls/, /trajə'ls/
	<u>unbiased</u>	/ai/ or /aja/	/ɔnbəɪst/, /ɔnbəjəst/	/iə/ or /ajə/	/ɔnbɪə'st/, /ɔnbəjə'st/
/əʊə/	<u>Lower</u>	/owa/	/lowa/	/owə/	/lowə/
/ɔɪə/	<u>royal, loyal</u>	əja/	/rɔjal/, /ləjal/	/ojə/ or /ɔjə/	/ləjə/, /ləjə/

e) - Substitution of French sounds for English ones, notably /y/ and /œ/ in the lieu of /ju/ and /ɜ/ in given phonological environments. /y/ notably occurs in C+u+C-environments as in *impunity, futility*, whereas /œ/ in environments where either /ɜ/ or /ə/ is expected. So, in CamFE *skirt* and *futility* will be pronounced /skœt/ and /fytiliti/ respectively.

f) - The introduction of nasal vowels /ɔ̃, ɛ̃, œ̃/ in Vowel+nasalConsonant-environments. It is perhaps important to point out that these are vowels borrowed from French, not nasalised vowels suggested by the phonological environment or the result of assimilation as Atechi (2016) contends. Amah (2012) also alludes to /ĩ; û/, to me these are idiosyncratic or basilectal forms of language. Their occurrence is so marginal that they cannot be regarded as systematic features of CamFE.

These nasal vowels obtain in Vowel+nasal consonant environments. It should be noted that in such environments native speakers usually render the vowel and the following consonant thus involved accurately such that *comfort* for instance will be pronounced /kʌmfət/ in RP. Native English vowels that occur in such environments are /a/, /ʌ/ and /ɛ/. CamFE speakers on their part systematically resort to the abovementioned French nasal vowels which they supply for RP sounds as the substitution summary table below shows:

Table 4: Substitution of nasal vowels in CamFE

Feature	Word	CamFE subs.	CamFE	CamE subs.	CamE
/ʌ/	<u>comfort, strongest</u>	/ɔ̃/	/kɔ̃fət/, /strɔ̃gest/	/ə/	/kɔmfət/, /strɔ̃ngest/
	<u>country, along</u>	/ɔ̃/	/kɔ̃tri/, /ə'lɔ̃/	/ə/	/kɔ̃tri/, /ə'lɔ̃/
/ɛ/	<u>members, intensions</u>	/ɔ̃/	/mɔ̃bə's/, /ɪntɔ̃ʃəns/	/ɛ/	/membə's/, /ɪntɛʃəns/
	<u>sentence, impunity</u>	/ɔ̃/	/sɔ̃tɛs/, /ɪmpɪnɪti/	/ɛ/	/sɛtɛns/, /ɪmpɪnɪti/
/ɑ/	<u>enhance, infants</u>	/ɔ̃/	/ɛnhɑ̃ns/, /ɪnfɑ̃ts/	/ɑ/	/ɛnhɑns/, /ɪnfɑnts/
	<u>canceled, demanding</u>	/ɔ̃/	/kɑ̃sɛl/, /dɪmɑ̃dɪŋ/	/ɑ/	/kɑnsɛl/, /dɪmɑ̃dɪŋ/

g) - /h/ intrusion or deletion. Atechi (2016) and Amah (2012) are concurrent on the point that CamFE speakers have a very high propensity of /h/deletion in environments where it is expected. Interestingly, they tend to insert this sound where nothing suggests it. /j/ deletion is also often observed in /j/+u+consonant as in *universe* and its derivatives. A high number of CamFE speakers thus almost invariably pronounce *universe* /univœs/ or /univə s/. Amah (2012) also mentions a strong tendency for CamFE speakers to realise /h/ intrusion in phonetic environments where it is not normally attested or expected, and delete it in contexts where it is instead expected and must thus be attested. This can be captured in the typical CamFE pronunciation of ‘happy’—APPY—and ‘honest’—HONEST.

h) - Conspicuous renderings of the ‘ed’ morpheme. The data below from Safotso (2012: 2473) summarise these renditions.

Word	RP form	CamFE form	CamE form
<i>separated</i>	/sepəreɪtɪd/	/sepəret/, /sepəretɪ/	/sepəretɪ/
<i>walked</i>	/wɔkt/	/wɔlk/	/wɔkt/
<i>planted</i>	/plɑ:ntɪd/	/plɑn/, /plantɪt/	/plantɪt/
<i>ended</i>	/ɛndɪd/	/ɛnd/, /ɛndɪt/	/ɛndɪt/
<i>concluded</i>	/kɒnklʊ:dɪd/	/kɒnklud/	/kɒnkludɪt/
<i>allowed</i>	/əlaʊd/	/əlowɛd/	/əlaʊt/
<i>traced</i>	/treɪst/	/tras/	/trest/
<i>asked</i>	/ɑ:skt/	/as/, /askɪt/	/ast/
<i>finished</i>	/fɪnɪʃt/	/fɪniʃ/	/fɪniʃt/
<i>returned</i>	/rɪtɜnd/	/ritɔɛn/	/ritɛn/
<i>damaged</i>	/dæmɪdʒt/	/dameɜz/, /dameɜt/	/dameɜt/

i)- Systematic devoicing of word final obstruents and word final consonant deletion—notably construed of as a strategy of consonant cluster alleviation. Thus *married*, *lab* and *five* tend to be pronounced /marɪt/, /lap/ and /faɪf/ respectively. Words with final consonant clusters like *president*, *left*, *texts* are pronounced /pRezɪdɛn/, /lɛf/ and /tɛks/ respectively.

j) - Instability of word stress placement, with a fair trend of forward stress. The table below from Amah (2012: 47) adduces evidence to support this:

Table 5 Realisations for word stress

N ^o	RP Stress	Responses	N ^o of Respondents	Percentage
24	e'specially	'especially	10	27.78 %
		e'specially	17	47.22 %
		espe'cially	9	25 %
25	su'premacy	'supremacy	7	19.44%
		su'premacy	18	50 %
		supre'macy	11	30.56 %
26	en'couraged	'encouraged	7	19.44 %
		en'couraged	16	44.44 %
		encou'raged	13	36.11 %
27	Ca'nadian	'Canadian	19	52.78 %
		Ca'nadian	17	47.22 %
28	'difficulty	'difficulty	10	27.78 %
		dif'ficulty	14	38.89 %
		diffi'culty	12	33.33 %

29	'relative	'relative	4	11.11 %
		re'lativ	32	88.89 %
30	de'termin	'determin	6	16.67 %
		de'termin	14	38.89 %
		deter'min	16	44.44 %
31	'monitor	'monitor	18	50 %
		mo'nitor	18	50 %
32	pro'vision	'provision	21	58.33 %
		pro'vision	15	41.67 %
33	repu'tation	'reputation	16	44.45 %
		repu'tation	20	55.55 %

4. CamFE, a variety different from CamE?

To the lay man, language variation may refer to utter differentiation between variants of the same language. To them, this may even mean that the said variants bear no resemblance. This, though, is a very naïve view of linguistic processes, for neither variation nor change supposes utter alternation leading to zero resemblance between variants A and B of a given language. Other linguistic processes, not language variation and/or change; may lead to this. Suffice it to question history to find evidence in support of the view that though language is bound to vary and change, remnants of the original (common core) of the resulting varieties are always borne or kept. Two cases, in the history of the English language attest to this; the case of British English and that of American English.

The term British English is, to say the least, fuzzy, for it is a cover term for a number of local or regional varieties within Britain, though a great many people are not aware of this. Some very fashionable and famous varieties of British English are Received Pronunciation (RP) or BBC English, Estuary English and Cockney English. The differences between these varieties are most often a matter of just a couple of features which constitute characteristics of the parlance of a particular region or of a group of people. One main feature that marks off Estuary English from RP is the vocalisation of /l/ in word final position when preceded by /v/ as in *beautiful* pronounced *beautifu*. Other factors like the presence or absence of post-vocalic /r/ would also justify the labeling of a certain speech as a variety. No need to stress the point that RP, though regarded outside Britain as the prestigious and legitimate representative of British English, is in fact mostly seen within Britain as an elitist accent spoken by 3 percent of Britons. No matter how marginal the differences between the aforementioned varieties are, they are considered by most linguists as varieties of one language: English.

Taking a look on American English will offer a similar picture. American English is far from being the uniform language most uninformed people believe it is. General American (GenAm) or CNN English, as it is often referred to, is its most famous variety. Another very famous variety of American English is what Labov termed Black American Vernacular English, other linguists refer to it as Ebonics. Two very significant features that qualify Ebonics as a variety of American English are the use of double negation as in '*we don't want no violence*', and the systematic pronunciation of *ask* as *axe*. Other syntactic features like non-inflection of 'be' are alluded to in the literature.

In clear, the one thing to be understood here is that language is not incompatible with variation, as it is not an immutable thing. This view is deeply rooted in the variationist sociolinguistic research paradigm spearheaded by Kachru in the early 1990s. Yet, language variation, or even change, does not necessarily imply absolute differences to the point where two varieties bear no resemblance with each other. The status of a variety usually rests on a couple of observable linguistic facts. No matter the number of varieties a language counts, they share a set of common features at all levels of language analysis.

Following this logic, it seems fully legitimate to argue that the differences between CamE and CamFE, their common features notwithstanding, are sufficiently numerous for one to safely state that CamFE is a variety in its own right, not just an appendage to CamE. As the literature above indicates, these differences can be found

almost at every phonological level. Essomba Fouda (forthcoming) adduces evidence in support of the existence and distinctiveness of CamFE at the level of discourse style. Whether it is autonomous or not is one of the foci of Essomba Fouda (2022). In this paper, we limit ourselves to showing that the reality of CamFE cannot just keep being negated, owing to what research at its present state indicates.

5. CamFE speakers: defining qualifying parameters

So far, we have been able to show, using evidence from the literature and drawing parallels with what is observable in other varieties of English, that CamFE in its present state of scientific description can confidently be looked upon as a variety of English on its own. At this juncture, we are going to address the question of who speaks CamFE. A good answer to this critical defining question will inevitably require a presentation of the current state of thinking on this issue.

A global picture of the literature on CamFE reveals that enough ‘CamFE awareness’ has been gained, which has translated into the carrying out and publication of empirical academic works over the past decade. It should, however, be observed that though linguists agree on the existence of CamFE, they lack such agreement when it comes to selecting its defining parameters. They, in the main, concur that CamFE is the variety of English spoken by Francophone Cameroonians which has developed and is still in the process of developing stable features. Beyond this, research is tilted to any direction, notably at the level of informants selection.

Atechi (2015) decries this situation, and observes two main trends in selecting and classifying CamFE speakers¹: those whose selection continuum ranges from secondary school students and drop-outs, to workers with special training in English, to University students in other fields than English and to bilingual university students (Kouega 2008; Safotso 2012); those who select CamFE speakers exclusively at University level, notably amongst bilingual students (Amah 2012; Essomba 2013, 2014a; Simo Bobda 2013). Atechi contends that the selection of CamFE speakers at various levels of the continuum, together with the use of differing elicitation techniques, raises more dust than it aims to settle in coming up with the definition and, probably, typology of CamFE. To come to terms with this apparent confusion, Atechi (2016) proposes a tri-label nomenclature of CamFE as CamFE 1, CamFE 2 and CamFE 3. It should be said beforehand that these labels mediate with three parameters: length of exposure, curricular pattern² and proficiency level, all of which interact with one another.

CamFE 1 designates speakers of English from Francophone homes who learnt the language in the Anglophone system of education. CamFE 2 is used for speakers of English from Francophone homes studying English at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels at University (they usually begin by following a bilingual program at the undergraduate level and jump into a purely English program in English Modern Letters at the postgraduate level). CamFE 3 refers to speakers at the secondary school level and also secondary school drop-outs.

This nomenclature is laudable in many respects. First, it seeks to avoid confusion by offering a paradigm future research could expand on. Second, it seeks to delineate CamFE in respect to the education model of speakers, proficiency and exposure parameters, thus avoiding the erstwhile all-embracing view of Kouega (2008) and Safotso (2012).

This laudability notwithstanding, it should be observed that it bears some weaknesses that need to be addressed and redressed. The tri-label approach could in fact just stand in one: what Atechi (2015) calls CamFE 2, but it should be extended or modified. We return to this later. CamFE 1 and CamFE 3 would just be knocked off for the following reasons. CamFE 1 speakers are exposed to English as early as CamE speakers. Their length of (academic) exposure is equal to that of Anglophone³ speakers who are the same level of instruction as them. Most importantly, English assumes exactly the same functions to them as to these Anglophone speakers: school subject, medium of instruction and first official language. To us, regarding these speakers as CamFE, not CamE,

¹ We wish to remind the reader that defining a language or a language variety is intrinsically linked to knowledge of its speakers and their background. These are very important issues to be taken into consideration when attempting to have any say on what any language is or should be.

² We simply mean by this phrase the education system through which the user of English goes in Cameroon. Cameroon is known to have two education systems: a Francophone system which is French based and an Anglophone system which is English based. Most Francophones who end up studying and using English begin their education in the French-based system of education before jumping into the English-based one.

³ The reader should be reminded that the term Anglophone as used in Cameroon traditionally referred to Cameroonians from the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon which were under British administration during colonization. Though this view has witnessed a change in quite recent times, the term is used here in the traditional sense.

is equal to entertaining the non-linguistic view of the concept of Anglophone and Francophone as he who or she who hails from the North West and South West or the other eight regions of Cameroon, respectively.

The non-validity of CamFE 3 stems from the fact that it refers to people whose knowledge of English is very shallow. As a result, their competence is usually so poor that they can hardly afford sustaining oral communication in English. They may have some commendable writing skills, but are most often able to come up with just shreds of spoken English. The reasons for this could be found elsewhere (see, Essomba 2014b, for more). The one thing which remains true is that speaking shreds of a language does not qualify one as a speaker of that language. It might have been motivated by the definition of CamE which includes speakers with a minimum education level of GCE/OL (Simo Bobda 1994; Kouega 1991; Atechi 2006). Yet CamE speakers are English-L2 speakers to whom English is not only a subject but also a medium of instruction and first official language.

Obviously, similar defining—by implication, typological—criteria cannot be transposed onto CamFE. English is a foreign language to Atechi's (2015) CamFE 3 speakers; it is just a subject in their curriculum, not a medium of instruction. They hardly, if at all, make use of English in their daily verbal communication except when found in the classroom during the English Language class. The English Language class hardly makes room for sustained oral communication on the part of these learners. Their exclusive input source is most often the teacher. Here, the notion of proficiency level should be taken very seriously when qualifying people as speakers of a given language variety. Speakers of a so-called variety must exhibit a certain level of proficiency to qualify as such. CamFE 3 speakers hardly do. They, therefore, cannot qualify as CamFE speakers in our view.

To us, Atechi's (2015) CamFE 2 group of speakers would be a good picture of CamFE. It should be expanded or modified, though. Speakers of a language variety need to exhibit a certain level of proficiency in that specific variety. The language also has to assume certain functions in their lives. As observed earlier, neither CamFE 1 nor CamFE 3 speakers thoroughly subscribe to these requirements. Only CamFE 2 speakers seemingly do.

This label would ideally include Francophones with a degree in the bilingual studies or pursuing their studies in this series, as well as secondary school drop-outs and workers who have had access to formal training in specialised language centres, such as Pilot Linguistic Centres, the American Cultural Centre and the British Council. Language programs and instructional material in these institutions are far more sophisticated than what Francophones have access to at school. In sum, only Francophones having completed or following a degree program in the bilingual studies and those having been trained in the aforementioned specialised institutions should be regarded as CamFE speakers.

In addition to the above criteria, CamFE speakers must possess one very important ability: functional competence. Functional competence here should be understood as the ability for these speakers to sustain prolonged (oral) communication on a wide range of topics in a wide range of contexts (formal and informal). This is not to be confused with proficiency which is a somehow blurred or fuzzy concept referring to skill or know-how. The point is that a speaker may be proficient in discussing, say, linguistics in English, while they lack such aptitude in doctor-patient talk where they should describe the symptoms of an ailment or in the language of worship in church. Functional competence stands levels above proficiency. So, proficiency alone cannot make it. As a concluding remark, it could be said that the CamFE 2 deemed fit for defining this New English and its speakers is a modified and extended one.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was two-fold. It primarily aimed to show that CamFE really exists. Its second aim was to clearly state who qualify as speakers of this variety. The first part of this paper was devoted to revisiting the history of English in Cameroon with a view to trace erstwhile attitudes to and perceptions of English varieties in Cameroon and thus bring to the limelight the wonderful shift in paradigm noticed in recent times, which shift has translated into the massive and impressive rush for English by Francophones. The second part of the paper was devoted to reviewing literature related to English in Cameroon, sorting all phonological features that mark off CamFE from CamE. The remainder of the paper was the crux of the work, and focused on delineating CamFE nomenclature. It was notably concluded that CamFE cannot stand out as an all-embracing variety under which even basilectal features or features that appear to be exclusively CamE's would be included. Atechi's (2015) CamFE 2 speakers as modified in this paper best qualify, in our view, as speakers of Cameroon Francophone English. These speakers should possess functional competence in English.

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