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**Ethnolects of Cameroon English: Pronunciation, Education, and Evolution**

From a cross-disciplinary perspective this study analyses the evolution in ethnolects of CamE¹ along the educational echelon. Focusing on sociolinguistic variables, empirical evidence from the BanE² and WimE³ case studies reveal phonological processes such as: phonemic

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¹ CamE = Cameroon English
² BanE = Banso English
coalescence, clipping in long vowels, diphthong reduction, close substitution, vowel lowering and raising, the preference of strong for weak vowels, recurrence of free variations, fossilisation in CamE, retention in ethnolects, approximation of RP\(^4\), etc. These processes are induced by linguistic parameters such as the substrate effect, reverse transfer, phonotactic restriction or permissibility, naturalness, the abstract underlying phonemic representations vs. the surface phonetic realisations, the principle of least effort, etc. Speakers of these ethnolects have given some English phonemes different phonetic and phonological values in their varieties. One can then predict that over time and space, some of these ethnic English features will extinct, as some already were, while the stabilised elements could become systems of their own, simultaneously forming a part of the mainstream yet maintaining their ethnic texture.

It is interesting to realise that the retained ethnic elements, and those of RP approximated do not only become linguistic indicators that locate a speakers’ regionality, or socio-educational status but they also form linguistic cues that trigger negative or positive reactions in listeners to, and speakers of CamE ethnolects and CamE with an RP tinge. CamE ethnolects are overtly stigmatised. CamE with RP nuances has some covert prestige attached, but it also does not escape stigmatisation. It can be concluded that Cameroonian social attitudes toward variation in pronunciation do not just reflect linguistic quality per se but are also an expression of a social practice which replicates an awareness of the status or prestige attributed to a variety by the community. Therefore, the differing attitudes and evolving pronunciation styles are not just determined by sociolinguistic variables, but also reveal the affective, cognitive, and behavioural dispositions which Cameroonians exhibit toward accents of CamE.

\(^3\) WimE = Wimbum English

\(^4\) RP = Received Pronunciation