

## Current Insights into the Evolution of Cameroon English: The Contribution of the 'Anglophone Problem'

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*The resurgence of what is today referred to as the 'Anglophone problem/crisis' has led to several sociocultural, religious, political and linguistic developments which have in no little measure contributed to reshaping the linguistic landscape of Cameroon. Through the Ecolinguistic and Descriptive Statistical Approaches, this investigation delves into the linguistic fallouts and dynamics of the crisis and illustrates how through different linguistic processes like borrowing, neologisms, affixation, blending, clipping, translation and interpretation, etc., English in Cameroon is undergoing indigenisation. This paper demonstrates how the sensitive issue at stake has proffered a propitious breeding ground for the eventual enrichment of the lexical capital of the language. Thus, recurrent patterns in popular usage, viz: ambalander, aluta continua, total ghosting of towns, black cats/vipers/tigers of General Ivo, dipper wearing regime, Bui/Manyu county, royal beggars, Operation Whistle and Pepper Spray, inter alia, constitute new forms of expression as well as old forms that have been accorded novel semantic shades in order to express meaningful thought.*

### Introduction

The malleable nature of language and its use especially in multilingual contexts like that of Cameroon continue to fascinate keen observers. This context proffers quite a rich linguistic repertoire that has greatly facilitated interpersonal interactions as well as communication across cultures. Evidently, it is here that language users take advantage of the linguistic resources that characterise their plethora of speech communities to express thought (in)advertently. Besides, interested researchers continue to be fascinated by users' manipulation of the codes inherent here to emerge with innumerable linguistic patterns and structures that showcase the beauty of language.

Language change, an unavoidable linguistic occurrence, is one of the phenomena keen observers have been grappling with. Engendered by historical, political, sociocultural, religious, idiosyncratic and linguistic dynamics, change, especially in this context, is quite palpable. It is here that the evolution of the English language, for example, continues to defy related projections. Cameroon English (CamE) has gradually evolved into a continuum in its own right with functionally distinguishable varieties, reflecting the linguistic landscape in which it thrives.

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This investigation adds to erstwhile statements on the evolution of English in Cameroon with focus on the impact of what has become known as the *Anglophone Problem/Crisis*. Focus is on how the evolution of the crisis has and continues to impact language behavior and behavior towards language as Cameroonians grapple with issues related to the problem. It is envisaged that the issues at stake are quite preoccupying and having considerable ramifications across all levels of national existence. This write-up attempts to investigate the impact of the crisis on the linguistic behavior of Cameroonians and on CamE in particular. Worthy of note here is the fact that this investigation relates to language in politics, political linguistics or linguistic politics, as the case might be and not a political piece. As such, the issues it raises are not in any way a reflection of the investigator's political stance. It is essentially apolitical. For convenience, this paper is divided into four whole sections beginning with an introduction and followed by a presentation of the backdrop to the situation. Then, there is a review of erstwhile statements on the subject followed by the methodology and the theoretical frame on which the paper is hinged. After, the presentation, analysis and discussion of findings are done. Before the concluding section, there is a section on the consideration of the implications of the investigation and some perspectives highlighted.

### **Background to Study**

The Anglophone crisis which witnessed full-scale escalation in October 2016 has been a culmination of grievances ranging from sociopolitical, linguistic and cultural misappropriation of the privileges and hegemony of a people who decided to rise for their rights. A better appreciation of the dynamics of the crisis necessitates a brief sociopolitical history of the country.

History has it that following the German defeat in World War II, one of her seized colonies, Kamerun, was placed under British and French protectorates as trustee territories. Following a United Nations organised plebiscite (now considered controversial) in February 1961, British-administered Southern Cameroon voted to join the French-administered East Cameroon and after independence in October 1961, both states formed a two-state federation. This alliance existed up to 1972, when the former president - Ahmadou Ahidjo changed the system from a federal to a unitary state which was rebaptised in 1984 as *La République du Cameroun* by the current president - Paul Biya. This alteration both in the nomenclature and system of rule were both interpreted by the Anglophone political class as serious acts of treachery intentionally geared towards the eventual assimilation of the Anglophones. Thence, a series of contending voices under the banner of resistant entities such as the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) began clamouring for the defense of the

complete constitutional legacy of Anglophones, a return to federation and other options for secession.

The uneasiness that characterised the alliance attained climax in September 2016 following a brutal repression of a peaceful protest orchestrated by Anglophone lawyers in response to the incessant marginalisation of the practice of Common Law in the two Anglophone regions of the country. The unrest was compounded by a solidarity mobilisation of Anglophone Teachers' Trade Union on grounds of wanton and increasing discrimination with regard to policy implementation, total disregard and jeopardy of core values of the Anglophone sub-system of education. The indiscriminate and massive arrests, gruesome torture, especially of university students, only exacerbated the already critical situation. In December 2016, attempts towards legitimising the struggle led to the formation of the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) to champion impending negotiations with the government. Failure to reconcile differences amidst increasing acts of civil disobedience including the destruction of public and private property, grounding of economic activities, desecration of national symbols, repression and torture, etc., the government outlawed CACSC, detained most of its leaders, as others fled the country, and branded them extremists and terrorists.

Nna-Emeka<sup>1</sup> observes that the escalation set the pace for the unavoidable intervention of highly disgruntled activists in the diaspora with their new agenda – from federalism to total and unconditional secession of Southern Cameroons renamed *The Republic of Ambazonia or Ambazonia*. For greater unity and to give more meaning to the struggle, the numerous activist in Nigeria, Europe, America and South Africa trickled down under the umbrella of The Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF) with an Interim Government (IG) of Ambazonia led by Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, the establishment of the Southern Cameroon Broadcasting Corporation (SCBC) to disseminate related propaganda and the Southern Cameroon Ambazonia Education Board (SCAEB) to enact a new curriculum reflective of the core values of Anglo-Saxon education.

SCACUF, its IG and other nascent resistant factions have been at the forefront of national and international protests and other legal undertakings to attain their secessionist objectives. From October 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, with the eventual declaration of the independence of the *Federal Republic of Ambazonia* by Sisiku Julius, there was a twist in events that turned more violent with the emergence of armed secessionist groups in different localities of the Anglophone regions. Amidst the intensification of acts of civil disobedience, terrorist acts such as kidnappings for ransom, summary executions of abducted military and security personnel as well as non-sympathisers, assassinations, arsonist tendencies on administrative buildings, schools and hospitals, destruction of roads and bridges,

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1. Okereke Nna-Emeka, "Analysing Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 3, no. 10 (2018): 8-12.

there have been outright military confrontations between the military and the armed groups leading to loss of lives and property.

Vehement crackdown by the military and resistance by separatist groups have led to the escalation of humanitarian crisis of an international magnitude with the influx of fleeing Cameroonians into neighbouring countries like Nigeria. From the outset of the crisis, despite remedial measures undertaken by the state (release of some activists, educational, sociocultural and legal reforms), the conspicuous deployment of heavy artillery and military personnel, the arrest in Nigeria, judgement and sentencing of members of the Interim Government with heavy charges and prison terms, the resolve of the National Assembly not to table the issue of the crisis, all constitute complementary evidence of its half-heartedness in finding a lasting solution and this has only engendered more resenting voices from within and out of the country. Today, at the diplomatic level, as activists in the diaspora continue to vouch for the recognition of *The Republic of Ambazonia*, sporadic armed confrontations between the military and separatist groups are rife, summary executions of 'traitors' to the cause, ghost town operations continue to cripple the economy, general fear, frustration, resignation and above all uncertainty characterise life in both regions.

### Cameroon English: Some Related Statements

CamE has received relatively much attention and different domains of the variety have been investigated from various perspectives. From a historical perspective, Mbassi Manga<sup>2</sup> establishes that both linguistic and non-linguistic influences have considerably shaped contemporary English in Cameroon with foreign contacts and orality being at the forefront of the influence. Lexico-semantic explorations such as Ubanako<sup>3</sup> have highlighted the forms, sources and characteristic features of the different varieties that constitute the continuum. These findings have been compounded by Ubanako<sup>4</sup>, Simo-Bobda<sup>5</sup>, Mbangwana<sup>6</sup>,

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2. Francis Mbassi-Manga, "The State of Contemporary English in Cameroon," in *Cameroon Studies in English and French* (ed.) Francis Mbassi-Manga (Victoria: Pressbook, 1976), 49-63.

3. Valentine Ubanako, *Varieties of English in Cameroon: Forms, Characteristics and Sources* (Cameroon: The University of Yaoundé I, 2008).

4. Valentine Ubanako, *Cultural and Institutional Terms in CamE Usage: A Lexico-semantic Study of Newspaper Language* (Cameroon: The University of Yaoundé I, 2000).

5. Augustin Simo Bobda, *Lexical Integration in Cameroon Standard English* (Cameroon: The University of Yaounde, 1983).

6. Paul Mbangwana, "The Linguistic Deculturation of English Usage in Cameroon," in *Official Bilingualism and Linguistic Communication in Cameroon* (eds.) George Echu and Allan Grundstrom (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 87-102).

Anchimbe<sup>7</sup>, Kouega<sup>8</sup>, Ubanako<sup>9</sup>, studies which demonstrate that CamE borrows extensively from French, Pidgin English and Home Languages and thanks to linguistic processes such as clipping, compounding, semantic extensions, reduplication, etc., novel forms continue to invade and enrich the lexical economy of the language. They concur that diffusion and contact continue to shape the language, according to its present identity.

The phonological aspects of the language have equally received much attention. Simo-Bobda<sup>10</sup>, for example, establishes that the phonological system of the language has developed into a quasi-autonomous system with marked deviations from Received Pronunciation (RP) explained by the assumption that some RP rules do not apply in CamE and that others are uniquely Cameroonian. These findings are later attested in Nguéfac<sup>11</sup> with usage pinned down on some extra-linguistic correlates such as age, sex, gender, education, ethnicity, occupation and mood and that there exists a direct correlation between these variables and CamE phonology.

At the level of grammar, studies such as Nkemleke<sup>12</sup> and Sala<sup>13</sup> have respectively investigated CamE modal categories and the syntax of the CamE sentence. Whereas the former attests to the use of similar modals in CamE and BrE, their use is, however, often restricted, generalised or simplified in CamE. The latter study affirms a departure from normal syntactic rules and the Cameroonisation of the sentence structure with three deviation types: those that are overtly variant, those that are covertly variant and those accounted for by difficulties in applying transformational rules. Sala<sup>14</sup> further insists that CamE syntax defies the British English (BrE) notion of a norm and embraces the 'democratic and least effort criterion' which accepts an 'avowed error' as a norm in so far as it poses little or no intelligibility problems to interactants.

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7. Eric Anchimbe, *Cameroon English: Authenticity, Ecology and Evolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2006).

8. Jean-Paul Kouega, *Aspects of CamE Usage: A Lexical Appraisal* (Muenchen: Lincom Europa, 2006).

9. Valentine Ubanako, "Non-Native Expatriate English: An Emerging Variety (Category of Users) in Cameroon?" in *Bordered Identities in Language, Literature and Culture: Readings on Cameroon and the Global Space* (eds.) Mathias Mbuh Tennuh and Emelda Samba Ngufer (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publication, 2019), 116-128.

10. Augustin Simo Bobda, *Aspects of Cameroon English Phonology* (Verlag: Peter Lang), 1992.

11. Aloysius Nguéfac, *Extralinguistic Correlates of CamE Phonology* (Cameroon: University of Yaounde 1, 2001).

12. Daniel Nkemleke, *A Corpus-based Study of Modal Verbs in Cameroon Written English* (Cameroon: The University of Yaounde 1, 2002).

13. Bonaventure Sala, *Aspects of Cameroon English Sentence* (Cameroon: University of Yaounde 1, 2003).

14. Bonaventure Sala, "Does Cameroonian English have Grammatical Norms?" *English Today* 22, no. 4 (2006): 59-64.

The analyses of the pragmatic aspects of the language have equally produced interesting findings. Mbangwana<sup>15</sup> shows how dysphemistic and euphemistic usage further enrich and accord CamE an identity. This identity is further reflected in the use of some features such as *na*, *eihn/ein* and *ya* in CamE as attested in Ouafeu<sup>16</sup>. These particles have gradually gained their *lettres de noblesse* in mainstream CamE and they effectively attenuate face threats. Nkwain<sup>17</sup>, through a study of dissertation acknowledgement pages in Cameroon, opines that the polite language behavior of Cameroonians is essentially a measure of the direct transposition of the different sociocultural aspects of decorum in the language. This is further attested in Nkwain<sup>18</sup> wherein, in the same context of study (dissertation acknowledgements), there is predominant use of lexical material that has either been drawn directly from local realities or localised to fulfil immediate communication exigencies. Ubanako<sup>19</sup> attests to an emerging variety of the language, at the centre of which are non-native expatriate English users.

The foregoing review attempts to paint a vivid picture of the state of art of the language. What remains evident is the fact that the evolution of English in Cameroon continues to incite the curiosity of both purists (mavericks) and permissivists especially with regard to its recognition. Despite contending stances, research to showcase the legitimacy of CamE is still to relent.

### Methodology and Theoretical Frame

This write-up hinges on the hypothetical premise that, like other accredited varieties of English, CamE is subject to change at several linguistic levels due to users' dire need to fulfil communication prerequisites. The study seeks to further

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15. Paul Mbangwana, "Eupemisms: A Study in the Art of Genteelizing and Sentimentalizing," *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (1988): 11-24.

16. Yves Talla Sando Ouafeu, "Politeness Strategies in Colloquial Cameroon English: Focus on Three Pragmatic Particles: *na*, *ya* and *eihn*," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 15 no. 4, (2006): 536-544.

17. Joseph Nkwain, "Dissertation Acknowledgements (DAs) in Cameroon English: A Study in Linguistic Politeness," *International Journal of Linguistics (Acta Linguistica Hafniensia)* 47, no. 1 (2015): 33-52.

18. Joseph Nkwain, "Further Evidence of the Indigenisation of English in Cameroon: Pitting the Norm against Localised Forms in Dissertation Acknowledgements (DAs)," in *Bordered Identities in Language, Literature and Culture: Readings on Cameroon and the Global Space* (eds.) Mathias Mbuh Tennuh and Emelda Samba Ngufor (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publication, 2019): 76-96.

19. Valentine Ubanako, "Non-Native Expatriate English: An Emerging Variety (Category of Users) in Cameroon?" 2019, 116-128.

legitimise the existence of CamE as a variety in its own right. It stems from the fact that over time, this variety has become localised or nativised by adapting to its local habitat. It is informed both by the *Ecolinguistic and Descriptive Statistical Approaches*.

The high degree of complexity, comprehensiveness and the depth of analysis in Ecolinguistic studies have been highlighted. Stibbe<sup>20</sup> asserts that:

“In essence, ecolinguistics consists of questioning the stories that underpin our current unsustainable civilization, exposing those stories that are clearly not working, that are leading to ecological destruction and social injustice, and finding new stories that work better in the conditions of the world that we face. These are not stories in the traditional sense of a narrative, however, but rather discourses, frames, metaphors and, in general, clusters of linguistic features that come together to convey particular worldviews.”

In characterising the approach, Gavriely-Nuri<sup>21</sup> asserts that there is further insistence on the particular worldviews or “cultural codes” referring to “a compact package of shared values, norms, ethos and social beliefs... [which] constructs and reflects the community’s “common sense.”

This approach closely relates to the Cultural Critical Discourse Analysis, a somewhat wider framework built on a culture of peace and the promotion of values, attitudes and behaviours based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity.

The *Descriptive Statistical Approach* involves a contextual presentation of linguistic forms with attention paid to their sources, patterns, characteristics, frequency of occurrence as well as an attempt to apprehend their pragmatic and semantic values. The approach gives form and meaning to linguistic forms used. Following the approach, features were identified, quantified and described in their different contexts. The features were quantified so as to determine their distribution and frequency of occurrence. Each feature registered was counted as many times as it occurred in usage. This was to determine its frequency of occurrence. The sum of all the features (n) was then used to calculate the frequency of occurrence for each feature. The following formula was used:

$$\frac{\text{No. of features}}{\text{Total no. of features per domain of use (n)}} \times \frac{100}{1} = \text{percentage}$$

The percentages obtained highlighted the frequency of occurrence for each feature or expression registered.

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20. Arran Orcid Stibbe, “An Ecolinguistic Approach to Critical Discourse Studies,” *Critical Discourse Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 117-128.

21. Gavriely-Nuri, Dalia, “Cultural Approach to CDA,” *Critical Discourse Studies* 9, no. 1 (2012): 77 -85.

This study is essentially synchronic with the time frame dating from October 2016 with the escalation of the crisis to May 2020, the end period of data collection. However, there are possibilities of the recurrence of features traceable to an earlier period before the escalation.

The data set was culled from documented and oral sources. Documented sources included national newspapers (regular, tabloid and online), public and private reports and diverse reactions on social media on the crisis. Through the participant observation role, data were also culled from oral sources through formal and semi-formal discussions. The approach involved a systematic reading of related information from the sources identified above with particular attention paid to budding and innovative forms of expression used in discussions related to the situation of the crisis. Features that constituted novel forms of expression were highlighted and extracted for eventual analysis and description.

Similarly, provoked discussions particularly geared towards a discussion of issues about the crisis were tape-recorded with the consent of the participants, and later replayed and novel forms highlighted for subsequent analysis. In the same way, some of the attested forms were used in discussions in a bid to verify their intelligibility to other users. Such discussions functioned as checklists through which highlighted forms were accredited. Thence, all the features culled were presented and described within their different contexts of occurrence.

### **Data Presentation, Analyses and Discussion**

What is now referred to as the Anglophone crisis/problem has and continues to impact the sociopolitical, economic and linguistic landscape of the entire nation. At the linguistic level, users' attempts to express both collective and individual aspirations, thoughts and sentimentalities are characterised by advertent and inadvertent use of both novel forms to capture situational realities as well as existing ones accorded new semantic shades. With spread and use, these features keep encroaching the lexical economy of CamE, stamping it with a unique identity.

#### **Domains of Use**

Features culled can broadly be redistributed under domains that characterise the existence of users across the national triangle but which are particularly related to the crisis. They include conflict/civil disobedience, history/politics, administration and governance, the media, sociocultural/economic domains and education and are examined in turns.



## Conflict/Civil Disobedience

As earlier indicated, the crisis has been fraught by verbal confrontations, armed conflict and diplomatic interventions. Manoeuvres in both camps have been characterised by conventional, makeshift offensive and defensive tactics that have ushered in novel forms of reference as Table 1 demonstrates.

**Table 1.** Expressions on Conflict and Civil Disobedience-Related Words and Expressions

Expression	Contextual Meaning	Freq.	%
terrorists/extremists	sympathisers of the cause	184	8.21
General No Pity, General Die, General R.K., General Ivo, General Chacha, General Amigo, General Fire, Field Marshal	self-proclaimed separatist warlords	180	8.03
odeshi	protective charms for invincibility	167	7.33
to ghost/Operation (Total/Wicked) Ghost Town	complete lockdown/stay at home in protest	167	7.33
to be visited by the ghost	attacked/killed/burnt down mysteriously	160	7.13
Operation Whistle/ Operation Faeces Resistance/Operation Pepper Soup Spray/Operation Shame	respectively, the use of whistle sounds, excreta and peppered water or soup to alert against and ward off armed forces during raids and disrespect public authorities	158	7.05
Block-by-Block Resistance/Nation-by-Nation Resistance/Neighbourhood-by-Neighbourhood Resistance	armed counter operations in defence of major localities in the two regions	146	6.42
Coffin Revolution	form of protest staged by Mancho Bibixy (activist/journalist) which involved self-presentation in a coffin during protests as his resolve to die for change	146	6.42
Ambazonian Black Cats/Ambazonian Mambas Tigers of Ambazonia/Vipers of General Ivo	armed separatist groups	140	6.24
Amba Struggle	secessionist movement	136	6.06
two Cubes of sugar that have refused to dissolve in water	used in reference to the sturdy resistance put up by the two regions	128	06
The Neira 10	the 10 activists abducted from Neira Hotel in Nigeria and jailed in Kondengui prison in Cameroon	100	4
enabler	non-sympathiser	100	4
to waste/to garri	to execute	89	4
groundnuts	bullets	86	3
popcorn	sounds of gunshots	68	3

water na water (water is water)	separatist slogan repeated during and after combats	60	3
Atanga Njis and Co./Atanga Nji Boys	untrustworthy government officials and counter separatist armed militia allegedly sponsored by Paul Atanga Nji (Minister of Territorial Administration)	56	2.25
The Incarcerated 12 Ghost Town	complete lockdown/stay at home in protest of the arrest of the 12 activists in Nigeria	40	2
Pa Tassang Wilfried Perseverance Ghost Town	complete lockdown/stay at home in protest of the arrest of one of the activists	12	0.53
Operation Giant Catapult (Rubber Gun)	use of a locally fabricated anti-aircraft weapon	10	0.44
<i>Aluta continua</i>	Portuguese expression for "the fight continues"	8	0.35
<b>Total</b>		<b>2241</b>	<b>100</b>

The calibre of expressions in this category is a reflection of the resolve on both sides to defend their different interests. The high frequency of *terrorists/extremists* (8.21%) is explained by the consistency in government actions to denounce and discourage acts of civil disobedience and this prompted a new law on terrorism with defaulters judged in a special criminal court. Similarly, an increase in the number of armed separatist groups with a self-proclaimed warlord at the helm of each equally explains the high frequency of 8.03%. The resolve of the separatists and activists is beautifully captured in the bestial images incarnating courage, death and ferocity; cubes of sugar that have refused to dissolve in water, acts of arson and summary execution of non-sympathisers by the ghost, recognition of victims as acts of encouragement through special lockdown days, defensive operations and the resignation not to give up through propaganda carrying the signature *Aluta continua* at the end.

### History/Politics

Politicking occupies a central place in crisis-related discussions and because it entails incessant and outright expression of idiosyncrasies as well as collective thought, it has greatly enhanced and contributed to the enrichment of the linguistic stock with expressions such as the following found in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Expressions Emanating from Politics

Expression	Contextual Meaning	Freq.	%
The Restoration (Movement)	return to federal system	196	11.07
zombies of La République	very old and inactive leaders	185	10.45
an octogenarian dipper wearing rogue	very old/criminal members of government	168	09.47
dangerous/endangered species,	ageing members of government	150	8.45
a photocopy of the CPDM/dagger/bad news	Fru Ndi (main opposition leader) as an unreliable opposition leader	145	8.17
lying tilapia	Issa Chiroma Bakary (then Minister of Communication) as a liar	132	7.46
Who left the bag of idiots open again?	Paul Atanga Nji/Ekema Patrick, respectively, Minister of Territorial Administration and Mayor of the Buea Urban Council	129	7.27
Mr. book miss road.	Prof. Ghogomo Ephraim, head of government commission to negotiate with activists	115	6.50
La République Police Haram	police misdemeanor	98	5.53
to wirbalise	to lash out critically	87	4.91
An Independentist	a separatist	69	3.90
CPSDF no longer SDF/	failure of the SDF as main opposition party having shady deals with the ruling party (CPDM)	60	3.39
SDF fornicating with CPDM	failure of the SDF as main opposition party having shady deals with the ruling party (CPDM)	57	3.22
SCNC + CONSORTIUM = TERRORISM	Castigation of the role of both formations	48	2.73
Fru Ndi playing a Bamoun game	Fru Ndi as a traitor	40	2.71
a Greek gift to Troy	Airstrip found in the Bafut locality, one of the separatist strongholds	32	1.80
political seer	one's ability to foresee political changes	28	1.51
enemy in the house	French translation of <i>ennemi dans la maison</i> referring to a political traitor	14	1.58
the francophonisation	assimilation process of anglophones	10	0.56
doubting Thomases	skeptics of the success of the Ambazonian cause	6	0.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>1669</b>	<b>100</b>

In this category are a number of activist groups that have cropped up especially in the diaspora to galvanise efforts towards restoration, federation or secession (Table 3).

**Table 3.** *Some Activist Groups*

abbreviation	meaning
SCIG	Southern Cameroons Interim Government
SCLM	Southern Cameroons Liberation Movement
CACSC	Cameroons Anglophone Civil Society Consortium
SCP	Southern Cameroons Police
SCACUF	Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front
SCDDIS	Southern Cameroons Department of Defense and Internal Security
SCCO	Southern Cameroons Correctional Office
CAC	Cameroon America Council
SCSA	Southern Cameroons State of Ambazonia
APDB	Ambazonian Public Data Bank
AUV	Ambazonians United in Victory
CPSDF	Cameroon People's Social Democratic Front
MORISC	Movement for the Restoration and Independence of the Southern Cameroons
AGC	Ambazonia Governing Council
CP	Consortium of Parents
CPSDF	Cameroon People's Social Democratic Front
SCNC	Southern Cameroons National Council

Here, it is worthy of note that the democratization policy initiated by the President of the Republic, Paul Biya, in the early 90s, which ushered in the proliferation of political parties and greater freedom of speech, has all been instrumental in giving the populace the leeway to freely express their thoughts and sentiments about governance and politics in general. This is well reflected in the plethora of activist groups (though largely considered illegal in the country) and the proliferation of derogatory and demeaning expressions used to directly or indirectly refer to state authorities with relative impunity. Besides, some of them are reminiscent of a people eager to expunge their individual and collective frustration. The proliferation of these groups, especially on social media, is against the backdrop of the government's resolve to discourage and ban such movements and their activities. As such, public adherence to such movements is tantamount to subversion and therefore, punishable by the new law on terrorism.

### **Administration and Governance**

Corruption, embezzlement, discrimination and above all bad governance constitute the ills that have eaten deep into the fabric of public administration in Cameroon. Since independence, the English-speaking section of the country considers itself a direct victim and her elites have incessantly lashed out against the unending acts of injustice. Most of the features found in Table 4 are reflective of their sense of rejection and frustration.

**Table 4.** *Governance and Administration Related Expressions*

Expression	Contextual Meaning	Freq.	%
NOSO	clip of North West and South West Regions	102	13.40
colonial forces/colonial administrators/occupationists	all administrative, military and security personnel in the two Anglophone regions	89	12
county/counties	renaming of administrative units (divisions) in the two regions	80	10.51
Ambazonia/Ambaland/Republic of Ambazonia/The State of Ambazonia	the new state – a renaming of the two regions	80	10.51
Amba/Ambalander/Ambazonian	sympathiser of the cause/citizen of the new state	80	10.51
Ground Zero	two regions especially conflict-struck areas	76	10
Amba Fons/Chiefs	traditional authorities in the two regions	54	7.02
Bamenda Sheriff	the governor of the North West Region	40	5.25
SCnians	shortened form of Southern Cameroonians	36	4.73
Camerounese	characteristic of French/Francophone Cameroon	34	4.46
Banana Republic	French/Francophone Cameroon	34	4.46
royal beggars/chicken chiefs	traditional rulers in the North West and South West Regions	28	3.67
colonial Cameroun	French/Francophone Cameroon	28	3.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>761</b>	<b>100</b>

In this category, the expressions are quite indicative of states apart and the urge to create a physical divide between the two entities. Today, NOSO at 13.40% is the shortest and most expressive form of reference to the two Anglophone regions. Whereas the recurrence of *Cameroun* (with French spelling) is a direct allusion to French dominance and rejection, *Banana Republic* alludes to the fragile and unreliable nature of state institutions. As public administrative auxiliaries, traditional rulers (*Fons* in the North West and *Chiefs* in the South West) are alluded to with utter condescension and scorn as the people see betrayal and neglect of their role as custodians of the people and their traditions. In these ways, the people vent their discontent with the system in general.

## The Media

The role of the media in information dissemination has been quite invaluable. It is worthy of note that for fear of repression, arrest and imprisonment, most of the activists that fled the country make profuse use of the social media to diffuse related information. Despite government crackdown through internet cuts to completely check information flow, censorship has often been overridden thanks to the ingenuity of hi-tech media experts. As such, expressions such as these in Table 5 have emerged.

**Table 5.** *Expressions from the Media*

Expression	Contextual Meaning	Freq.	%
Facebook warriors/Keyboard politicians/activists	activists with activities limited on social media	204	45.13
Virtual Republic/Facebook Republic	a mockery in reference to the virtual state formed by activists	108	23.89
Bareta News	weblog run by Mark Bareta (an activist)	68	15.04
Ambaflashpoint	blog for related propaganda and updates	44	9.74
Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation	a propagandist television station	28	6.20
<b>Total</b>		<b>452</b>	<b>100</b>

Whereas the audio-visual landscape is totally unsafe for the dissemination of secessionist propaganda, those who have championed the cause have gone an extra mile to open a free-to-air broadcasting corporation based in South Africa where most of the activists reside. The *Facebook warriors/Keyboard politicians/activists* (45.13%) on social media (as they are derisively referred to) and sympathizer journalists continue to churn out separatist propaganda that provides fulfillment to adherents of the cause. However, again, they are often seen by public authorities to be citizens of a *Virtual Republic/Facebook Republic* at 23.89%.

## Sociocultural/Economic Domains

The sociocultural and economic implication of the crisis is obvious. Apart from displacement of hundreds of thousands into neighbouring Nigeria and in the other regions of the country, leading to insecurity, prostitution and poor living standards, the ghost town operations and destruction of roads and infrastructure have significantly grounded economic activities. Discussions about these, state of affairs have enhanced the cropping up of expressions (see Table 6).

**Table 6.** Expressions from the Socioeconomic Domains

Expression	Contextual Meaning	Freq.	%
the diaspora	used to refer to activists abroad	208	53.06
country Sunday	any of the days of complete lockdown	164	41.84
Amba	proposed currency for the new state	8	2.04
Amba time	used in reference to the time zone	6	1.53
Air Amba	name of air transport planes	6	1.53
<b>Total</b>		<b>392</b>	<b>100</b>

The frequency in the use of *diaspora* (53.06%) is reflective of the significant contribution of activists out of the country towards attaining their objectives. They constitute the masterminds behind all the propagandist and revolutionary tendencies that characterise the struggle. While ghost town enforcements have increased the number of *country Sundays*, such days have eventually become conventional days of silent protests officiously respected even by public authorities for fear of reprisals from armed separatists. The restricted use of *Amba* at 2.04%, *Amba time* at 1.53% and *Air Amba* at 1.53% can better be explained by the fact that they are still envisioned and are indicative of the resolve by sympathizers to improve the situation of the lots respectively, through a more valuable currency and a practical and reliable air transport system.

## Education

Educational policy and the form of education were the main grievances that ignited the crisis. One of the main British colonial legacies was the Anglo-Saxon system of education with highly cherished core values of integrity, moral rectitude, discipline and piety which seemed to be absent in the corresponding French system. Anchimbe<sup>22</sup> attests to the rush for English in Cameroon by Francophone learners of English not only because of the international status of the language but to tap from the positive values it incarnates. Paradoxically, despite the rush, countervailing attempts to jeopardise the system by those who benefit from it have met with sturdy resistance in a bid to preserve its integrity. To the activists, calling for school boycotts was just one of the ways of raising awareness about the sensitivity of the issue. Then, expressions such as these in Table 7 gained in prominence.

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22. Anchimbe, Eric, "Linguabridity: Redefining Linguistic Identities among Children in Urban Areas," *TRANS*, no. 16. (2006).

**Table 7.** Education Related Expressions

expression	contextual meaning	freq.	%
gangster education	education patterned on French system	88	67.69
school resumption	used in the debate over whether schools be reopened or not in the two regions following forceful boycott	42	32.31
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

Whereas users see in the erosion of their core values of English education betrayal and disloyalty, they suspect a well-calculated attempt towards the harmonisation of both systems and the eventual introduction of a *gangster* system of education (67.69%) that abrogates the positive core values. Following school boycotts, attempts towards normalising the situation prompted a redefinition of the notion of *school resumption* (32.31%), quite distant from the traditional recommencement of school activities. It now embraces the debates and controversies related to the question whether schools should resume or not and when.

### Resources of CamE Novel Forms

An overview of the features used indicates that they undergo several processes to be able to assert their existence in the lexical category of the language. These processes include different changes at the semantic level and are enriched both by linguistic and pragma-stylistic resources.

### Linguistic Resources

They include semantic extensions, desemanticisation, semantic deterioration, semantic reallocations and gap filling. They are taken up in turns.

### Semantic Extensions

These are expressions related to context induced reinterpretations with the attribution of new meanings to existing ones such that some words and expressions see their normal dictionary meanings modified at the semantic and pragmatic levels and extended to embrace new realities. For instance, *school resumption* no longer relates to the normal resumption of classes in September following the summer holiday but a whole debate related to effective schooling after the forceful boycott of schooling activities as called by the activists and reinforced by separatist fighters. Similarly, *The Restoration (Movement)* which historically refers to the re-establishment of the monarchy of King Charles II in 1660 is now used to refer to the return to the two-state federation that existed before the advent of the unitary state. Besides, *country Sunday* previously used to



refer to a traditional Sabbath – a day set aside to rest, is used today to refer to the numerous intermittent days set aside by activists as a form of protest. In the same vein, *colonial forces/administrators* and *occupationists* are not in any way related to European colonisation or occupation of annexed territories but references to all stationed security and armed forces as well as the different territorial administrators considered to be ‘illegally’ serving in the English-speaking part of the country. Similarly, sympathisers of the Anglophone cause are now generalised as *terrorists* or *extremists* depending on opinions held.

### Desemanticisation

This is a case of ‘semantic bleaching’, that is the partial or total loss of the original or the main semantic content of an expression due to recontextualization. For example, *La République du Cameroun* (French name of the entire country), otherwise referred to as *la reporblik*, is now redefined to exclude the English-speaking part of the country.

### Semantic Deterioration

Here, a new/old word is adopted and accorded a negative meaning as the case may be, to target specific institutions, stakeholders and the system in place in general. *Zombies of La République, an octogenarian dipper wearing regime* and *rogue/gangster regime* constitute direct castigations of state leaders rendered inapt because of advanced age but continue to cling to power. They are actually considered to be *very dangerous* or *endangered species*. In *Fru Ndi is a photocopy of the CPDM/dagger/bad news*, one discerns the people’s disappointment with his failure as the main opposition leader to save the people from the excesses of the regime. Referring to Minister Issa Chiroma Bakary (then State Minister of Information) as a *lying tilapia* following his outright denial of the existence of an Anglophone problem cannot be less derogatory. Similarly, *royal beggars* and *chicken chiefs* seriously demean the roles of traditional rulers despite the esteem in which their subjects are supposed to hold them. The failure of the learned Professor Ghogomo Ephraim, carefully chosen to lead a government delegation to negotiate with activists earned him the tag - *Mr. book miss road!* a reminder of his inability to use his level of education to resolve the crisis. *La République Police haram* likens the abusive and repressive tendencies exhibited by the police on unarmed protesters to the wanton acts of the dreaded terrorist group – Boko Haram. The roles of Minister Paul Atanga Nji and Ekema Patrick, respectively, Minister of Territorial Administration and the then Mayor of Buea Rural Council in containing separatist activities cannot, however, be underestimated. However, because of the consistent inconsistencies in their untrustworthy declarations, their interventions have often been insultingly brushed aside through the rhetoric *Who left the bag of idiots open again?*

## Semantic Reallocations

In the usage, there is the allocation of completely new or localised meanings and the attribution of new grammatical functions to certain words to make them more expressive of particular meanings. As such, the notion of *ghost town* operations that started in the early 90s as a form of protest against electoral malpractices regained in prominence during the crisis to reinforce collective disobedience. *Pa Tassang Wilfried Perseverance Ghost Town* and *The Incarcerated 12 Ghost Town* are now operations reallocated in recognition and to encourage some of the courageous activists in jail. These days are intensified during their trial days. *To garri* and *to waste* are now regular expressions used to refer to summary executions of non-sympathisers by separatist fighters. The use of the *garri* image (local foodstuff with cassava, grated, squeezed dry and fried in very light oil) is reflective of the pain the victim goes through during their execution. Whereas a *county* normally refers to any of the geographical divisions within England, Wales and Ireland forming larger units of the local government; it is now used to refer to the main local towns (divisions) which make up the Anglophone section of the country, viz: *Bui/Manyu/Boyo/Mezam counties*. They constitute the main strongholds of separatist activities.

## Gap Filling

This generally refers to the emergence of novel forms where none hitherto existed in order to fill communication gaps. When one of the members of parliament – Honourable Joseph Wirba had the effrontery to address the Anglophone crisis during one of the parliamentary sessions in defiance of the firm orders of the Speaker of the National Assembly (to whom it was a taboo subject), the verb *to wirbalise* - to be outspoken about a burning issue, immediately gained its *lettres de noblesse* in the literature. *Operation Whistle and Pepper Soup Spray/Giant Catapult (rubber gun)/Operation Shame Block-by-Block Resistance/Nation-by-Nation Resistance/Neighbourhood-by-Neighbourhood Resistance/Faeses Resistance* have all cropped up to define non-existent realities in the past. Similarly, *Ambazonia/Ambaland/Amba* (currency) all constitute novel forms.

## Linguistic Processes

The foregoing expressions demonstrate the use of a plethora of linguistic processes such as borrowing, derivation, back formation, conversion, clipping, blending, abbreviations/acronyms, neologisms and adjectivisation. They are examined in turns.

## **Borrowing**

An expression such as *Aluta continua* – a popular Latin American guerilla warfare expression from Portuguese and used to express the resolve not to surrender. The constant use of the French form – *Cameroun* and *La repoblik* (intentionally misspelt) in reference to the Francophone section of the country is indicative of the separatist tendencies.

## **Derivation and Back Formation**

*Occupationists* is formed from the noun *occupation*, in reference to administrative, security and armed forces in the Anglophone section of the country. Similarly, *francophonisation*, derived from Francophone is indicative of the assimilation of the people in the English-speaking section of the country. From *Amba*, coinages such as *Ambaland/Ambalander/Ambazonia* have been realised.

## **Conversion**

This often has to do with changes in word categories and this is evident in expressions like *ghost* (noun) in *ghost towns* which is transformed the verb *to ghost* as in the popular expression *All the towns should be ghosted!* In the same light, the noun *Wirba* can now be used as a verb - *to wirbalise*, meaning to speak out frantically against an unjust situation.

## **Clipping**

For stylistic reasons and for economy, whole or some word parts are reduced and reattached to others to surface with novel forms of expression. This is the case with expressions such as *NOSO* and *SCnians*, respectively, clipped forms of *North West* and *South West* and *Southern Cameroonians*.

## **Blending**

Unlike clipping that involves chipping off of word parts, in blending, different words or expressions are merged with possible changes to form new expressions. For example, the shady deals between the first and main opposition party - the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the ruling party – the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has led to the rebranding of the opposition party as *CPSDF - Cameroon People's Social Democratic Front*.

## Abbreviations/Acronyms

The literature is now rife with new abbreviations and acronyms all reflective of the diversity of opinions even in the separatist camp. They include the following:

- **SCIG:** Southern Cameroons Interim Government
- **IG:** Interim Government
- **SCLM:** Southern Cameroons Liberation Movement
- **CACSC:** Cameroons Anglophone Civil Society Consortium
- **SCP:** Southern Cameroons Police
- **SCBC:** Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation
- **SCACUF:** Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front
- **SCDDIS:** Southern Cameroons Department of Defence and Internal Security
- **SCCO:** Southern Cameroons Correctional Office
- **CAC:** Cameroon America Council
- **SCSA:** Southern Cameroons State of Ambazonia
- **APDB:** Ambazonian Public Data Bank
- **AUV:** Ambazonians United in Victory
- **CPSDF:** Cameroon People's Social Democratic Front
- **MORISC:** Movement for the Restoration and Independence of the Southern Cameroons
- **AGC:** Ambazonia Governing Council
- **CP:** Consortium of Parents

## Neologisms

They often refer to creative inventions that eventually gain in use and spread. They are the examples of *Camerounese* now used to refer to Cameroonians of French expression. *Bareta News/Ambaflashpoint* now exist as social media propaganda organs. Besides, *Amba* and *Air Amba* respectively refer to the envisaged currency and air transport service provider.

## Adjectivisation

To render usage more vivid and lucid, there has been the profuse use of adjectivisation as a linguistic strategy to paint glaring portraits of certain realities. Expressions such as *keyboard politicians*, *facebook warriors*, *colonial Cameroun* and *wicked/total ghost towns* make use of descriptives that accord them greater expressive power and intensity.

## Pragma-Stylistic Resources

Language users here equally employ a myriad of stylistic devices in their expression of thought and sentiments. They include dysphemisms, symbolism and imagery, allusions and rhetoric. They are examined below.

### Dysphemisms

The direct opposite of euphemistic usage (preference for suitable expressions at the expense of harsh ones), dysphemisms – referring to a spade as one, are rife in usage. For instance, reference to traditional authorities as *royal beggars* and *chicken chiefs* who purportedly abandon their roles as custodians of the people's traditions and cultures and liaise with public administrators for monthly stipends, reaps them of the inherent dignity and grace they are supposed to incarnate. Direct reference to top government officials as *zombies*, *an octogenarian dipper wearing rogue*, *Mr. book miss road*, etc., are indisputable cases reminiscent of their disrepute and resentment against these state functionaries. This is equally obvious in *SDF fornicating with CPDM*, a vivid attempt to castigate the treacherous role of the main opposition party suspected of entertaining shady dealings with the government at the expense of the people.

### Symbolism and Imagery

Usage here is fraught with images and symbols all reminiscent of the ills plaguing the whole context. The beautiful image of *the two Cubes of sugar* that have refused to dissolve in water in reference to the resolve of the two regions to fully defend their integrity is handy. *Atanga Njis and Co.* and *lying tilapia* with regard to Paul Atanga Nji and Issa Chiroma Bakari, both state ministers, immediately evoke memories of untrustworthiness, inconsistency and deceit as gleaned in their public defence of state policy and stance in relation to the crisis. Again, armed separatist factions are auto-named using very symbolically relevant tags such as *Black Mambas*, *Tigers*, *Black Cats*, *Vipers etc.*, bestial images expressive of their deadly, fearless and resolute nature. Similarly, their leaders, in a bid to inspire fear and respect, opt for labels equally symbolic of their different potentialities. As such, titles and names such as *General No Pity*, *General Die*, *General R.K.*, *General Ivo*, *General Chacha*, *General Amigo*, *General Fire*, *Field Marshal*, etc., abound in usage. For their invincibility, there is profuse use of *odeishi* (charms originating from neighbouring Nigeria) incised into their blood, tied with red cloths around the body or weapons. When they feel protected especially as gunshots from the military purportedly turn into water during combats, they repeatedly scream *Water na water!* (water is water), symbolic of resistance and eventual victory.

## Allusions

Like Biblical Thomas who insisted on verifying Jesus Christ's healed wounds before acquiescing to His resurrection, non-sympathisers to the cause have been generally termed *Doubting Thomases*. These are those who continue to believe that the activists are all *facebook warriors* or *keyboard politicians* resolved in creating a *Virtual Republic*. Besides, the only functioning airstrip found in the Bafut locality of the North West Region has been beautifully captured in the historical allusion of a *Greek gift to Troy* – a veritable symbol of repression and terror, understandably as it does not serve local transportation needs but a fortified military base to facilitate military operations across the region.

## Rhetoric

The Anglophone crisis has involved a lot of stigmatisation at different levels especially as extremist opinions abound. As such, if one is not for the struggle, automatically, they are styled the *enemy in the house*. On both sides of the divide, those who have championed the cause have inevitably exposed themselves to open criticism and accusations. Top state personalities such as Paul Atanga Nji (Minister of Territorial Administration) and the late Mayor of Buea Urban Council – Ekema Patrick, have severally been accused of impersonification and acts of perjury, casting doubt on their level of educational attainment. As such, their opinions have often been hushed down and vilified with the rhetorical – *Who opened the bag of idiots?* Hence, such usages put to question their status.

## Discussion

This study attests to the authenticity and legitimacy of Cameroon English as a non-native variety in its own right. The findings of this study corroborate and complement those of many other previous ones in several ways. The study provides complementary evidence showcasing the fact that the rich socio-cultural and multilingual backdrop of the country engenders language behaviour such that, through different linguistic processes, novel forms continue to invade and enrich the lexical economy of the language.

Anchimbe<sup>23</sup> demonstrates how the following forms from local cultures now constitute mainstream Cameroon English features: *country Sunday*, *bush meat*, *mbanyas*, *co-wives*, *misaddition*, *divorcee*, *rapee*, *cheater*, *chiefdom*, *fondom*, *ekwang*, *kanwa*, *sanja*, etc. Far from filtering the features identified in this study, their high frequency of occurrence attest to their effective integration of the lexical economy

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23. Anchimbe, Eric. *Cameroon English: Authenticity, Ecology and Evolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2006).

of Cameroon English. Like Mbangwana<sup>24</sup> who shows how euphemistic usage enriches Cameroon English with examples such as: the *elderly* (senior citizens), *typist* (secretary), *warder* (prison officer), *manager* (director), *the poor* (underprivileged), this study identifies the use of the contrary device – dysphemisms in an attempt to highlight certain societal incongruities. Just like Usongo<sup>25</sup> who investigates neologisms and comes up with expressions such as: *bellyticians* (stomach politicians), *karangwas* (ardent supporters), *yesamen* (stooges), *epesse* (traitor), *themocracy* (crazy democracy), *chopbrokepotism* (lavishness), etc., which characterise political parlance in Cameroon, this study adds to other illuminating examples of novel expressions that have been engendered with the outbreak of the crisis. Mpoche<sup>26</sup> identifies and describes semantic shifts and language change instances in Cameroon English with recurrent expressions such as: to *lower the volume of radio* (turn down), *buy a new car* (different), *taste food and you will hear how sweet it is* (know), etc. Apart from several instances of semantic shifts and change, this study identifies similar trends with desemanticisation, semantic extensions, semantic deterioration, semantic reallocations as linguistic resources of the language. Nkwain<sup>27</sup> attests to the invasion of Cameroonisms even in scientific writings such as dissertation acknowledgements with expressions emanating from the local environs. This study equally identifies the profuse use and attribution of various categories of titles and loan-blends from French and local languages to fill communication gaps.

Interestingly, it is worthy of note that Cameroon English fits within Schneider's<sup>28</sup> Dynamic Model which promulgates and explicates five phases (foundation, exonormative stabilisation, nativisation, endonormative stabilisation, and differentiation) in the development and evolution of postcolonial varieties of English. The Model views the achievement or otherwise of the five phases as yardsticks or some form of indices for estimating the developmental history of postcolonial Englishes as well as assigning a certain level of accomplishments

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24. Mbangwana, Paul, "Eupemisms: A Study in the Art of Genteelizing and Sentimentalizing," *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (1988): 11-24.

25. Kenneth Usongo, "Political Vocabulary in a Multilingual Setting: The Case of Cameroon's Emerging Democracy," in *Annals of the Faculty of Arts Letters and Social Sciences*, 189-199. Special Edition in Honour of Professor Paul N. Mbangwana (Cameroon: University of Yaounde 1, 2008).

26. Kizitus Mpoche, "Language Contact and Change in Cameroon," in *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences*, 121-138. Special Edition in Honour of Professor Paul N. Mbangwana (Cameroon: University of Yaounde 1, 2008).

27. Joseph Nkwain, "Further Evidence of the Indigenisation of English in Cameroon: Pitting the Norm against Localised Forms in Dissertation Acknowledgements (DAs)," 2019, 76-96.

28. Edgar W. Schneider, *Postcolonial English varieties around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

to them in respect to their growth. On account of this perspective, the framework indicates that the results of this study coupled with those of other previous findings attest to the fact that Cameroon English has attained a relatively acceptable level of nativisation. This is evident especially at the stabilisation phases where a compilation of the features attested in the language has led to Kouega's<sup>29</sup> *A Dictionary of CamE Usage*.

### Implications and Perspectives

The foregoing presentation attests to the inevitable encroachment of novel forms into the lexical economy of CamE. The probable question that arises is that of the integration of some of these features into mainstream CamE. Following Anchimbe's<sup>30</sup> *Integrational Filtration Hypothesis* which proposes a novel framework for filtering novel forms into mainstream languages, it is evident that most of these expressions would obviously qualify. With regard to the criterion of necessity, it is clear that these expressions tend to fill pressing linguistic gaps as well as help them in expressing natural feelings in relation to the issues at stake. Concerning appropriateness and time, they accurately paint a vivid picture of the sociopolitical realities inherent in this context during the particular period. As far as the appeal of the expressions is concerned, they are particularly appealing especially to supporters of the cause. Through them, users find communicational fulfilment as they air their minds of individual and collective frustrations. The question of the possibility of the adoption of such expressions in writing had already been provided a ready solution with the publication of the first edition of *English for Ambazonia Primary Schools*, an English didactic guide with vocabulary and other expressions reflective of the cause. However, the text was immediately banned and the publishers prosecuted. Regarding the population of users, usage here is rife and spread among a vibrant and not an ageing population of about 8 million people who constitute the active population of both regions. Concerns about the status of items can readily be addressed based on the simple linguistic understanding that when new words gain in spread and frequency in use, this defeats the issue of status as even official attempts to ban their use could only be effective at official levels. Besides, there seems to be a harmonious co-existence of the novel expressions with French, English Language, Pidgin English and the local dialects as attested in their high intelligibility rate with users of these other languages. Finally, the criterion of the consciousness of existing patterns is revelatory of positive attitudinal tendencies especially in those in whom the cause is deeply enshrined. For instance, it takes no extraordinary measures to reinforce ghost town operations over all the two regions as it has become a religion here.

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29. Jean-Paul Kouega, *A Dictionary of CamE Usage* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2007).

30. Anchimbe, *Cameroon English: Authenticity, Ecology and Evolution*, 2006.



Certainly, it is safe to claim that the expressions presented would go through the linguistic filtration process in as much as their use benefits from spread, frequency in use and a high degree of intelligibility. Though their use might be threatened by official exclusion, this becomes a linguistic aberration as far as the liberal expression of the thoughts and feelings of a people remain an indisputable natural phenomenon.

### **Conclusion**

The sociocultural, political and linguistic history of Cameroon constitutes a rich tale of tolerance, accommodation and resilience. Despite the highly acclaimed 'unity in diversity' slogan that proliferates in political discourse here, the inability to carefully harness the rich sociocultural, political, religious and linguistic resources of the country has undoubtedly weakened and disintegrated the strands that held the entire nation together. Today, dissension, mistrust, dissatisfaction and outright armed conflicts are seriously plaguing some parts of the country. The incessant zeal to lash out against societal ills has culminated in interesting linguistic fall-outs. The advent of the crisis, despite socioeconomic, humanitarian and psychological exacerbations, has proven beneficial at the linguistic level and CamE stands out as an indisputable beneficiary. Besides the artistry demonstrated by Cameroonians in their linguistic performances, the rich socio-cultural and multilingual backdrop of the country naturally proffers a propitious environment for the breeding of interesting linguistic phenomena that continue to attract keen researchers in diverse domains.

This study establishes that nascent forms in CamE are unevenly distributed across domains such as conflict/civil disobedience, history/politics, administration and governance, the media, sociocultural/economic and education. An overview of the features exhibits their propensity to undergo different changes at the semantic level as they are enriched both by linguistic and pragma-stylistic resources such as semantic extensions, desemanticisation, semantic deterioration, semantic reallocations, gap filling, dysphemisms, symbolism and imagery, allusions and rhetoric. The expressions equally demonstrate the use of a plethora of linguistic processes such as borrowing, derivation, back formation, conversion, clipping, blending, abbreviations/acronyms, neologisms and adjectivisation. Through this plethora of rich linguistic resources and processes, users have been able to surface with diverse forms used in expressing their concerns and feelings about the world that circumscribes their existence. At the linguistic level, this naturally-occurring situation has considerably impacted language behavior and behavior towards language in the speech communities here. Apart from helping in fulfilling the communicational aspirations of the people, one discerns in these developments further indigenisation of English in Cameroon. If the hegemony of CamE, just like that of other non-native varieties, is ascertained, the eventual

development of *Ambazonian English* as a response to the communicational exigencies of a people, might be fast becoming a linguistic reality to be accommodated, even if it appears to carry a distinct sociopolitical identity.

Like previous studies, this study attests to the legitimacy of Cameroon English as a non-native variety in its own right despite the numerous disdainful and prejudicial stances adopted by mavericks and purists in its regard.

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