The Cultural Basis for Vernacular Usage in Transplanted English:
Re-defining Post-colonial Cameroonian English

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Culture can be expressed through a language that is not native to it, such as a transplanted colonial language that has subsequently become institutionalized. In present day Cameroon, this can be done, and should be accomplished as well, through acceptance and advocacy of a considerable greater level of nativization in the form of English employed for intra-national communication and for educational purposes than more conservative scholars have been willing to consider. The role of culture in language usage is demonstrably substantial and capital in oral traditions transmitted through Cameroonian languages--Cameroonian Pidgin being an innovative example. It can be argued, for example, that models of linguistic creolization, based primarily on the situation in the islands of the Caribbean, are not applicable to the analysis of language contact in colonial West Africa, because in the former case speakers of the developing creole had lost their first languages and needed to create a new vehicle for cultural expression, while in the latter case there has been neither separation nor estrangement from the sources of native culture and language.

The legacy of colonialism and the inheritance of Western civilization, including a communicative and cultural medium such as the English language, have left post-colonial Africa groping in the dark for its identity, self-expression and raison d'être. One important way of attaining greater independence is to have control over the cultural, political, economic and social functions of language. This aspect of language has often been ignored with the result that second language acquisition has become the primary objective in attaining literacy and modernization in most post-colonial African states, including Cameroon. Ironically though, English for most anglophone Cameroonians is a first language of instruction from as early as kindergarten.

The purpose of this study is to examine the cultural basis for mother-tongue vernacular usage in Cameroonian English as an indicator of interlingual influence in a language contact situation--one we describe as a "pro-indigenous contact situation". Given that the traditionally accepted direction for language influence is that of the so-called "dominant" language imposing its will on the language(s) of the subject culture(s) and hardly vice versa, we want to take exception and demonstrate that the contact situation, the geo-cultural location, and the indigenous cultural support system (settlers versus natives, compadre elite versus the not-so-affluent indigenous population), leaves natural language ample room to "acculturate" to its immediate context of usage, and to perform the functions its "acquired users" so desire.

This study will demonstrate a number of less-than-obvious facts: English in Cameroon has come to stay; the general public wishing to access English will want to use it as freely and comfortably as they use other languages; English is used between Cameroonians as an intra-linguially native variety and not as a foreign language; efforts at using foreign standards and intellectual control mechanisms are doomed to fail; and finally, any language planning that fails to adopt the culturally adapted variety of CE as a tool for developing and providing literacy in Cameroonian languages will be putting the cart before the horse.

Upbringing and peer pressure are the tributaries of handed down and acquired wisdom. For modern Africa, formal education is a convenience that convenes most of the methods by which information can be passed on, crosschecked and tried out without ritual or ceremony as actual ways of living. The medium that defines these thought ways is the shared idiom--i.e. the way of characterizing life, of expressing its various manifestations--language. As we will see later on, pidgins and creoles demonstrate how cultural
requirements dictate linguistic choice and adaptability.

A look at some of the essays of students in our study\(^1\) reveals that no matter where Western education in Cameroon is going, the underlying ethos is consistently Cameroonian. In maintaining the ethos provided by their immediate and surrounding culture, these Cameroonian students have chosen to replace 'Native English' (NE) intuition (that they ought not pretend to have) with their mother-tongue (MT) intuition inherent in their child language acquisition. We presume here that the acquisition of a language cannot be without a pre-existing cultural substance—the material, presumed or imagined knowledge, which requires characterization and verbalization.

In our formulation, although quite over-simplified, culture = original substantial knowledge of a people; part of that knowledge is a language which is the bearer of some of that cultural baggage. Other bearers include music (esp. instrumental), dress, drawing, ritual performance, etc. As posited earlier, the primordiality and superimposition of culture over language makes translation and adaptation possible. Therefore language as a universal phenomenon can be put to work on any cultural material that was not originally intended for it to transmit. We presume that if there is no cultural material to 'carry', a given foreign language will either not survive, or it may simply transpose the culture it originally 'carried' into the new geo-spatial environment.

**Cameroonian English: a culture-bound phenomenon**

Having acquired new speakers and thereby allowing itself to be used differently, this variety of English is now Cameroonian. The English that once served as a language of control and domination, is today a tool for writing or accounting for pre-literate cultures and oral traditions. In fact, English is commanded by Cameroonian writers, historians and playwrights to communicate Cameroonian culture to a larger unified audience and readership. In this vein, English is bound by its new culture to be Cameroonian. It is unfortunate to note, as Burling (1970:3) observes that,

> [...] linguists have been extremely wary of attributing any sort of cultural explanation to the changes they have observed [in language]. They have worked out remarkably subtle descriptions of linguistic change, but the factors that have fostered the changes have been poorly understood and sometimes have even been dismissed as irrelevant or unknowable.

In analyzing the importance of culture as part of translation theory, Debe Osaji (1986) points out that unless the English language is 'adjusted' to interpret acceptable cultural values which are either considered to be exotic, alien or unknown to English civilization, then English in former colonies and developing countries "would contribute further toward stigmatizing their race and culture in the name of academic pedantry or servitude". In re-iterating the POWER of language, he says of English:

> Such a "powerful" language, with its accompanying culture—its morals, technology, skills, attitudes, values, and laws—has the contagious effect of stigmatizing, absorbing, assimilating or obliterating the "weak" languages or cultures. The colonization of Africa and the third world countries by the European maritime powers in the past 500 years is a typical example of culture spread resulting in language imposition. (Ibid)

To creatively foster something that is both proudly African and of universal import, we must turn to our own languages and the cultures they so well depict to lathe the English language with idioms and cliches that truly bestow the wealth of experience in the unappreciated cultures that make Africa so magical, just as the intelligentsia have found "such Latin expressions as sine qua non and non sequitur so erudite, such French expressions as joie

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\(^1\) This study was carried out initially as part of a doctoral research project. The G.C.E. scripts of forms 4 & 5 students in different linguistic communities were analyzed for cultural and vernacular usage. The appropriate "native" controls were used for comparison and validation of our hypotheses.


devivre and comme ci comme ça so fashionable, and such Japanese terms as samurai and kamikaze rather edifying" (Uwazurike, 1981 quoted by Debe Osaji 1986). However, post-colonial reaction to British linguistic imperialism expresses the continued mistrust of English as a foreign language; unless of course this English 'does its talking the African way!' The following examples taken from different G.C.E. scripts could be faulted as "miscomprehension", or "misprint", and in another way recognized as a "readjustment" to a vernacular influence:

A. Accepted Meanings or Collocations Extended to Vernacular Usage

1. He cried every now and then until his wish was granted.
   (He cried continuously, i.e. 'every now and every then').
   Mk: "ngele ngele" = 'often often' i.e. continuously

2. It was wonderful, a python had swallowed it whole!
   (It was amazing how a python could swallow all of it).
   Mk: "manyaka" = 'wonderful, amazing'.

3. I could not believe he was dead. He was my tight friend.
   (... He was a close friend).
   Mk: "ano kakimene" = 'he is tight to me'

B. Adjusting Separate English Lexical Items to Single Vernacular Lexical Items

4. Borrow1 me one hundred francs / Can I borrow2 a hundred francs?
   (Lend me one hundred francs / Can I borrow a hundred francs?)
   Mk: "onongize" = 'save' by rendering a service
   "onongize egbe" = 'save me by giving me a hundred' i.e. I am taking sth. from you
   (borrowing=lending).
   "natane nonga egbe?" = can I be saved with a hundred? i.e. I am taking sth. from you
   (borrowing=borrowing).

5. I've got a stranger1 in my house. He is my small brother.
   (I have a guest in my house; he is my younger brother).
   Mk: "Naveni nweni o ndowo yami. A veli ndi nwayong'wami mozali".
   There is a stranger2 in my house. He doesn't speak Bakweri.
   (There is a stranger in my house; he doesn't speak Bakweri).
   Mk: "Oveli nweni o ndowo yami. Azova mokpe."
   N.B. "nweni" = 'guest, stranger' = stranger 1 & 2 in CE.

C. Adaptation of Verbs and Adjectives

6. I was chanced to attend that wedding.
   (I had the opportunity to attend that wedding)
   Mk: "Na ma-loize lende lingi liva."

7. He has already impregnated her.
   (He has already made her pregnant)
   Mk "Ama loma limolitize."

8. I knew she was curious as soon as she began scratching the back of her ear and the soles of her feet.
   (Her uneasiness and discomfort were signs of sexual arousal)
   Mk: "Zeke meyangi me ngundu; wonange ndi wo motakizeh."

Expressing one's heritage consists in formulating ideas in an idiom that is not only
understood by, but also accepted as "belonging" to, members of a given group. To gain admittance into a group of which the key to membership is determined by a particular form of behaviour may result in deviations in speech constrained by the limits of group tolerance. To paraphrase Soundjock, African languages seem to be strong enough to "digest" English without much "indigestion"; can African English do the same?

**Emotions and reactions against linguistic imperialism**

Coming [as most Western linguists do] to African society and literature from without, [they have] first of all to give some attention to the difference in social and cultural context by which the individual [African] has, in part, been shaped. (Onley, 1973:ix quoted by Mazrui 1975). At one time, writing was the monopoly of a few, and also a foreign cultural concept. Insofar as writing in Cameroonian languages has not been vulgarized and is still an academic experimental exercise, promoting Cameroonian culture cannot wait longer as younger generations are losing out on knowledge handed down through oral tradition.

English as a linguistic tool can be used to dispense this knowledge before it is too late. That English must be well adjusted to perform this new task well enough to replace the failing ability of parents to educate their children in cultural and linguistic matters. Failure to do so will confirm the fear of a haunting reality observed by H.M. Bot-Ba-Njock and assoc. (1977:517):

*Nous savons tous, pour en avoir été les témoins, pour les avoir analysés, ou lus sous la plume des Sénghor, Césaire, Fanon, Cheik Hamidou Kane, Oyono, sans parler de nos collègues psycho-pédagogues et sociologues, les effets d’une telle école sur l’éducation chez nous: les parents, convaincus de la suprématie de l’école et du savoir qu’elle dispense sur le savoir et la sagesse qu’ils ont reçus de leurs aînés, confortés dans cette opinion par la réussite sociale des premiers scolarisés en même temps que par le peu de cas fait des illettrés, les parents (dont la famille) se taisent, renoncent à transmettre l’éducation qu’ils ont reçue et comptent sur l’école pour faire de leurs enfants les hommes modernes qu’exigent les temps nouveaux. La tradition orale perd ainsi de sa vigueur et prend figure, chez les jeunes, au fil des ans, de raconter de grand-mère.*

As reiterated earlier, all education need not be formal even though written literature, as opposed to oral tradition, ensures accuracy, better consultation and easier transmission. But home training and peer example can ensure that one is well brought up and mannered accordingly. Bot Ba Njock and assoc. (Ibid:517) see it this way:

*Autrefois, si nous songeons à nos parents et à nos grands-parents, l’enfant recevait de ses aînés une sagesse, celle qui avait mené la vie jusqu’à lui et lui permettre de la mener au-delà de lui: contes, proverbes, histoires, savoir patiemment écouter et appris, où il pourrait puiser au fil des jours et qu’il avait mission de transmettre. Initié et adulte, l’homme était analphabète mais éduqué et cultivé.*

Aspirations towards reading and writing—the tools with which to express one’s heritage—would therefore be nil if literacy and traditional education are kept one apart from the other. Reading and writing should enable the Cameroonian child to understand language and the cultural values it propagates—this, to the extent that the child would be able to express these values and others in any language whose linguistic tools have been learned from school or elsewhere. A lack of marriage between these two will create an ominous vacuum between the MT and the language of instruction (L1).

*C’est elle [l’école] qui a creusé au coeur des enfants ce fossé entre la famille qui ne fournir plus les clés de la vie et ce savoir scolaire qui ne fait pas un homme.* (Ibid)

Instead of having school break the mechanisms for traditional education, these
should be introduced in the school curriculum as 'traditional studies' or parents should be
given the tools to promote such education at home alongside what is being learned from
school. We presume therefore (as is the case with French in Cameroon, Ibid, 1976) that
English in Cameroonian schools without the traditional dimension lends itself to human
impoverishment—trading one evil for yet another: "de l'analphabète cultivé, il [English] a fait
et fait encore, hélas, un alphabète inculte." (Ibid:518)

While post-colonial Africa must somehow find its own norms for the English it has
adopted or is otherwise stuck with (even though some of these norms will probably not be
too distant from those in other English-speaking regions of the world), an understanding of
the forces which act upon any inherited second language might help us establish certain
inherent patterns of naturalization (Ikome, forthcoming) that would justify a
characterization such as 'Cameroonian English'. As previously argued, the use of English
in a natural and cultural environment previously foreign to it calls for a kind of 'individual-
based experimentation' in an effort to "try out" English as an ordinary but new medium of
communication—a process we characterize as "functional acculturation".

Some creativity on the part of the individual who has been exposed previously to
some communicational medium, and has a substantial amount of cultural orientation, would
require that that individual bend the rules of the target language as a way of accommodating
already ingrained MT rules, or simply allow for rule-generating skills that do not
necessarily satisfy those of the target language. While some terms such as "silk cotton
tree" seem to respect an English compounding rule Adj + Adj + N = N (described by
Spencer (1970:28) as "a pleasant arboreal oxymoron for a very elegant tree, not, however,
exclusive to West Africa"), others defy the rules to come up with forms whose meanings
are nowhere close to those suggested by the rule structure they follow, often warranted by
new cultural parameters:

New plants and animals (otherwise not referred to using latinate stems)
"cutting-grass": a large African herbivorous rodent with highly adapted
razor-sharp teeth for cutting and chewing savannah grass.
"ground-beef": an edible large rodent that nests in a maze of tunnelled
holes in the ground.
"bush man": someone whose behaviour is out of line with accepted social
codes of conduct.
"bush mango": a species of mango that is not usually grown but rather
flourishes in the wild and is still edible.
"bitter-herbs/leaves": a culinary and medicinal vegetable from an
evergreen plant.

Compounds Referring to Indigenous Objects and Institutions and
Syncretisms Arising from Marrying Afro-european Cultures
"chewing stick": a fibrous piece of wood from a plant used instead of a
tooth brush; like a cigar, greater satisfaction and effectiveness are achieved
by chewing the stick.
"pepper/grinding stone": a stone with a smoothened surface on which
pepper and other condiments are ground.
"mortar pestle": a long piece of wood used to pound fufu, vegetables and
grain in a hollowed out log.
"head-tie": a triangular or rectangular piece of cloth (usually silk or cotton)
tied around the head to hold in long or bushy hair, or used simply as part of
one's outfit.
"chicken parlor": a restaurant-bar in which roast chicken is served as
well as beverages.
"off-license bar": a bar with a limited permit to sell beverages "to go",
i.e. one without sitting accommodation or a dance floor.
"on-license bar": a fully licensed bar which serves beverages, has sitting accommodation, a dance floor, etc.
"mammy wagon": any over-sized truck, or pejoratively, any ugly-looking vehicle used for heavy transportation.
"township taxi": from French "taxi de ville", a vehicle authorized to carry multiple passengers from one part of town to the other.
"highway taxi": a vehicle authorized to ply a given route or routes between cities.
"talking drum": a carved wooden musical instrument used to communicate long distance messages.
"piss pot": a bed pan, usually used at night, or when one is bed-ridden due to illness (especially in homes with outdoor latrines).
"fetish priest": a traditional diagnostic therapist, who can trace the source of an ailment and prescribe a cure for it (usually a protective object).
"native doctor": a traditional medicinal doctor who has, through a long apprenticeship, learned to use certain herbs and roots to cure ailments.
"nurse-baby/baby nurse": a person who, in the place of parents or immediate family, is paid or compensated for taking care of a baby. (the emphasis and object of address is on the "nurse" and not the "baby", that's why that order--originally from MTs and then CP--is preferred).

English was learned as a means of accessing a foreign culture and re-enacting its values in a geographically new land. In spite of the colonial educational policy inherent in a planned furtherance of 'indirect rule', many individual and high profile Cameroonians chose to fully reap the benefits of English education in order to fit into the new way of life offered by Western civilization. This was somewhat an exception to the intended British policy which, according to Westermann’s summary, assumed that 'native [African] political institutions contain values which are capable of development and whose loss would be detrimental to the people. Its object, therefore, is to preserve these values and enlist them in the service of the new administration' (Westermann, 1949). The same EFL was used to develop an educational system that thoroughly undermines traditional values and teachings (even though the latter were orally transmitted); this interruption in the handing down of knowledge orally, meant that 'knowledge' came more from abroad through, say, Shakespeare, the BBC and London night life. No wonder speaking English was a proud indication of one's provenance from the metropolis, one's literacy marked by a pen in the breast pocket, or goggles hanging gingerly on the tip of the nose.

In the G.C.E. scripts used here as source data, there was a marked difference in the lexical and syntactic choice made by students in the discussion of certain topics; in fact, there was a dichotomy reminiscent of the function of English in Cameroon. The examples below demonstrate the use of English as a foreign vs. intranational language:

**Excerpt 1.** ... Like most people in the N.W., Basso people eat a lot of maize. It is prepared in many horrible concoctions. I hate most of them. The staple food is a scummy yellowish grub made into corn mush by stirring dry ground corn into boiling salted water. It is then cut and moulded into little mounds about the size of a giant grapefruit. Using the bare fingers, it is coated with green vegetables and swallowed in little lumps about the size of a table tennis ball.

**Excerpt 2.** ... no other cereal can possibly be transformed in so many ways. In Nso, we roast corn on the cob and bite the grains off hot. Trashed corn can be baked on a hot stone and with a pinch of salt it is ready to eat. Fermented corn mixed with dried germinated seedlings make a tasty and filling broth called quacha, or a sweet beverage known as corn beer. Our staple food and the best transformation of corn is fufu-corn. It consists
of fine ground corn powder stirred into boiling water to form a smooth kind of fufu. It is eaten with vegetables in red palm oil and dried beef or chicken.

Both texts discuss the different dishes made from Indian corn, with details on the favorite dish prepared by Nso people. Excerpt 1. tells us that the student is either ashamed of any association with his tribal dish, or he has been away from his village and therefore lost touch with his culinary culture. He sounds more like a European researcher who is trying to approximate descriptions that were poorly understood when given by an informant. There is a sense of misplaced arrogance when he uses multiple pejorative adjectives to make 'corn fufu' look like excrement! (Viz. 'scummy yellowish grub, corn mush, dry ground corn, little mounds, little lumps, giant grapefruit, bare fingers'). In an attempt to identify with a foreign cultural 'elite', this student, whose English reads more like an exotic ridicule than an original picture, demonstrates a misplaced status symbol. Excerpt 2. demonstrates originality and cultural awareness with respect to the food and dishes of Nso people. The appropriate use of English grammar and the skills of lexical and structural adaptation to meet the requirements of local color, enable this student to clearly describe the different uses of corn in Lamnso (Viz. 'roast corn on the cob, bite the grains off hot, trashed corn baked on a hot stone, dried germinated seedlings, quacha, corn beer, fufu-corn, fine ground corn powder, smooth kind of fufu, vegetables in red palm oil').

In fact, for many literate Cameroonian, English serves as an auxiliary language when one must fall back to it as a reassuring source of communicative prowess come time to conjure local reality and color. To be truly Cameroonian in English is still in the making: for, the ecstasies of birth and the tribulations of death, the admonitions of ill-health and the gratification of being well, the wisdom of old age and the apprenticeship of youth, the conjunctions of dreams and the configuration of reality, the conflicts of the mind and the resolutions of the soul, the flavor of dishes and the appetite for food, all require an appropriate mind set and the idiom to match. When English users understand what the MTs specially do, then a productive effort will be made on their part to use English to access the MT code. Establishment English is therefore a borrowed tool with which to run the 'cursed house of neo-colonial dependency'. It is possible to change both the image and the role of CE to make it a more acceptable "inheritance" and a feasible training tool for the development of national languages.

It will be political lie-telling, economic gambling, and cultural anarchy to presume that some day, some how, English can be shoved aside and replaced with a single indigenous Cameroonian language. Unfortunately, English as an official language or establishment English is seen, by those who have mastered it and have everything to gain thereafter, as the only "correct" and "acceptable" form of the language, and worse still, as the only language worthy of learning and public use. Ironically though, the manner in which it is used in these "establishments" is less than equal to the standards set by them. There is every indication that English as a borrowed language is becoming an eternal debt unless its terms of application are reviewed in favor of realistic social functions and acceptability.

We hope to put forward a potentially controversial formulation to further justify the influence of MTs on CE--as is demonstrated in the "O" level scripts used here as source data. The "broken" rules and the "innovative" rules that constitute the "deviations" and "unusual formulations" in these scripts are erroneously attributed to the students' inability to distinguish between 'mother-tongue usage', 'pidgin usage', and 'English usage'. While confusion does in fact exist, there is an element of consistency, productivity and pervasiveness in what we consider to be a MT vernacular usage in the English of these students.

If therefore MTs do have an influence on CP, and CP in turn is said to influence CE, we hold that the substantial imposing presence of the MT linguistic culture invariably
felt in CP, follows the same "pattern of infiltration" in obliging CE to perform the same kinds of functions that they (the MTs) fulfil for Cameroonians living in Cameroon. Each of the CE sentences from the G.C.E. scripts below will be analyzed in reverse order, i.e. using the underlined MT vernacular string, as the possible source influence, we will trace its recurrence in CP strings and then through glosses, identify its imminence in CE.

Excerpt 1. He doesn't hear what his parents tell him
(He is stubborn)
Mk: azaveya (mato)
   (he not hear (ears))
CP: i no di hia
   (he not <prog> hear)
CE: he does not hear ...
   (he does not listen)

Remark: Using Allsopp's argument (see Kotev & Der-Houssikian eds. 1977), the above surface renderings show that while English and other European languages describe aspects of human conduct by using abstractions and latinate words, African languages represent the same aspects of conduct with the native resources of the language itself, often by reference to parts of the body--head, eye, mouth, hand, foot, heart, liver, belly or just "body". We do not only deduce from this logic that MT vernacular usage greatly affects certain matters of cultural conduct and perception, but also find a simple explanation for the apparent "deviation" in sentence structure and lexical meaning in CE. While Mosongo (1977) and other error analysts would consider such "deviations" as errors, we believe that they constitute the basis for establishing a lexico-semantic linkage with African languages--a process for creating new post-colonial language varieties such as CE.

Excerpt 2. His anger was beyond compare. Rather than shake his hand, he cut him a vicious look with his eyes almost falling out of their sockets
(...)
Mk: amoke mizo mawove
   (he him cut eyes ones bad)
CP: i kot im bad ai
   (he cut him bad eye)
   {vicious}
CE: he cut him a {terrible} look
   {angry}
   (he cast an angry look at him)

Remark: Although at first sight the expression "cut him a vicious look" appears "strange" and unEnglish, we have tried to establish its source through CP to Mk and to determine if its idiomatic effectiveness in these two is transferable to CE. As observed above, recourse to parts and functions of the body are used instead of the kinds abstractions used in English. In Bk, the manner in which the eyes are rolled in the sockets alongside other grimaces indicate anger, viciousness, or terror. It is the characterization of this physiological expression that results in the formulation of this expression. It is structurally and semantically picked up by CP to reproduce the accompanying gesture and to describe this culture-bound practice.

While the lexical item "cut" is used productively in metaphorical formulation (CP: kot nyanga = Mk: ke enyanga; CP: kot i wes = Mk: ke woluwe; etc.), a separate and more specialized verbal element is used to describe this act: Mk: lilunga = to scan somebody contemptuously from hair to toe; Ls: fo ka-ay = to search someone with light.
**Excerpt 3.** He makes me shake all over. To be sincere, I like Mosoke very bad, not because he has a lot of what we call mbam.

Mk: nalingani Mozoke wove zaizai  
(I like Mosoke bad very very)

CP: a laik Mosoke bad bad  
(I like Mosoke bad bad)

CE: I like Mosoke very bad  
(I like Mosoke very much)

**Remark:** The use of "bad" instead of "badly" is not the issue here. In fact, "bad" is used as an adverb, which (for some reason) without the "-ly" means "much", but with the "-ly" would probably mean "poorly". From our reverse analysis, the structure calqued from the MT has given "bad" a different meaning. The order of variation runs in the following manner: the structure is from the mother tongue, the lexical item from English, and the new meaning from the MT logic of perception.

**Excerpt 4.** I was near the edge of the rock but he continued pushing me. It remained a little bit and I could have fallen inside the deep ravine.

Mk: oteeni te oma nundi oteni  
(it remain little you say I fall inside)

CP: i rimeyn smol a fo fol insai  
(it remain small I (fut) fall inside)

CE: It remained a little bit and I would have fallen inside  
(A little bit more, and I would have fallen into ...)

**Remark:** The CP rendering of this sentence would be readily understood by many Cameroonians but few will realize that the exact same structure is used in their mother-tongue. The tendency would be for most to use a similar CE-type sentence and then be sanctioned (as was our student) for using pidgin. The suggested "correct" forms are either stylistic alterations or semantic modulations.

The logic of perception of the incident remains tied to the MT. For example:

SE A little bit more, and I would have fallen into
Mk tei nanu oma nundi oteni
CP smol so a fo fol fo insai
CE A little bit like that, and I would have fallen inside
SE I was on the point of falling
Mk namakombene lunda
CP a bin niya fo fol
CE I was near to falling
SE I very nearly fell
Mk nave lunda taito
CP a wan fol smol so
CE I almost nearly fell

While some of these CE sentence-types appear to be unEnglish and unEuropean, they do constitute a consistent and preponderant option among post-colonial Africans in general and Cameroonians in particular. Inasmuch as they are understood and accepted as sense-making, rule-obeying forms within many post-colonial linguistic communities, which must resort to an abundant and natural pool of mother-tongue linguistic and cultural idioms, these new English idioms need more than mere identification and correction: they need to be understood and given the attention they deserve as tools of communication that have been established as firm currency for a new breed of users.
Although Halliday (M.A.K.) (1974) is inclined to question whether or not there is a direct link between individual linguistic phenomena and non-linguistic aspects of culture, he acknowledges that such links do exist more so in the lexicon. Wierzbicka (1986, 1985b) goes beyond the lexicon to the grammar to suggest that although the existence of a link between culture and language is intuitively obvious and yet notoriously hard to prove (and often rejected in the name of scientific rigor), linguists can sharpen their methodological tools so that "apparently untractable and yet fundamental issues of 'language as a guide to social reality' can be studied in ways which are both linguistically precise and fundamentally revealing". (Wierzbicka, 1986; see Ikome, 1992).

We have examined the theoretical basis on which the hypothesis for this research is based: on the one hand MTs influence CE as a contact phenomenon comparable to the development of CP; on the other hand, vernacular usage in the G.C.E. demonstrates the role of culture in the formulation of perception using English. Our findings indicate that cultural parameters are mostly reflected in the lexicon. They also show how this is patched together in transplanted English to express realities that had hitherto been experienced only through the MT culture. For this reason, we have not just compiled lists of words but have sometimes delved into the structure of strings including idioms, metaphors, proverbs, etc. The ideal for many, would have been to analyze a comprehensive grammar of CE but our objective is broader than that.

The importance of Cameroon oral tradition as a source of inspiration for the Cameroon oral raison d'être requires that it be reflected in the first language of instruction (English) in the western part of Cameroon. The relative ease with which Cameroonians interact in CF is certainly feasible in CE in and outside the class-room when the cultural basis for MT usage in CE is dealt with as a sociolinguistic reality devoid of judgmental values and artificial norms.

Definitions:

The following definitions are necessary both in the coinage of new terminology and the reformulation of old ones--hopefully to address the issues raised in this article without conflicting with, or contradicting similar orientations in the existing literature. Some of these definitions are based on, and echo traditional usages but they have been reviewed to take out those hitches that would otherwise sour our debate.

-- **Acculturation**: A process emanating from a contact situation, in which different traits and elements of the interacting people are continuously transmitted to foment new and blended patterns. (Language acculturation will involve the adjustment and reformulation of usage and function to the immediate cultural context.)

-- **Culture**: a complex of human provisions such as knowledge, belief, customs, law, morals, opinions, religion, superstition, etc., learned and transmitted through the use of tools, language and other modes of communication and systems of abstract thought, from one generation to the other, from one people to the other. (A language with nothing to express is powerless, expressionless; it needs to articulate cultural content, part of which is itself or metalanguage.)

-- **First language of instruction**: the first language of formal education, usually introduced as early as nursery school and predominating throughout one's educational life. (cf. Bilingual primary and secondary schools attempt to use both French and English as first languages of instruction but their success rate has depended on the population mix between children from originally francophone or anglophone backgrounds, as well as the cultural environment outside the classroom in the locality of the school).

-- **Functional acculturation**: Adjustment in cultural perception and language use that enhances intercultural understanding and communication. (The adjustments made by the English language to address those cultural components that are originally conceived and patterned the Cameroonian way, are a function of the perceptive needs of its newly
acquired Cameroonian speakers.)

-- **L1 (first language):** a language that comes first as a tool for the achievement of a socially prescribed or required goal, usually social interaction (e.g. inter-ethnic, inter-group communication, formal instruction—western styled, apprenticeship, etc). English is a (L1) first language of instruction for many Cameroonians; pidgin is a (L1) first language of multi-ethnic socialization for the same set or others. Bakweri is a (L1) first language of cultural upbringing and ethnic or tribal affiliation.

-- **L2 (second language):** an additional language learned in order to access a new culture, thereby increasing one’s perception and thinking, as well as the scope of wider communication. (cf. English in Cameroon is a second language when what is learned is say British or American in cultural content, and is aimed at accessing the so-called "Internationally Received English". N.B. We are of the opinion that English as a language of international communication has to be culture neutral, or thoroughly culturally mixed, i.e. respecting pertinent contributions from different cultures. The excuse of "incomprehensibility" is the conservative learner's problem).

-- **Mother-tongue:** a language naturally acquired in infancy and/or childhood, usually the language of one's mother, the language of cultural initiation that moulds belief and allegiance to indigenous social institutions and their vision of the world.

-- **Native speaker:** the speaker associated with a specific language by virtue of his/her association by birth with a region or people. *The speaker and the language are said to have grown and originated in the vicinity, and were therefore not transported from a distant region: we would suggest the use of 'indigenous' in place of 'native' when there is a sense of that which is not only native but which, most probably, has never been introduced, transported, or brought from another area into the locality in question. The claim to the nativeness of English is concomitant with circumstance and the geographical environment in which the language acquires new speakers and itself acculturates to its new cultural environment. One does not necessarily have to be an "indigenous" English person become jailed fugitive "down under", or colon in the "New World", or eternal camper at the Cape, to earn the coveted and belabored "native English" speaker title. These migrants and the language they spoke were both, for certain, indigenous to the British Isles. Later generations are certainly at par with varieties elsewhere in the world which, nevertheless, might have been transplanted under a different guise. (*Circumstantial forces such as war, colonization, intermarriage, migration, etc., stunt the application of this conception, which therefore requires further explanation.)*

-- **Pro-indigenous contact situation:** A contact situation in which the traditional order of the dominating language influencing the subject language is tempered by the overwhelming presence of a vibrant indigenous sub-culture.

-- **Vernacular:** an expression or mode of expression natural to or used by indigenous or native group, characteristic of, or expressed in the style of a place, period, or group. Cf. "natural" and "characteristic" define vernacular usage in Cameroonian English.

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