

Forenames in Cameroon English speech

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Abstract

This paper deals with forenames in Cameroon English speech. It examines the structure of people's names, the sources and uses of forenames, the formation of pet-names, the orthographic representations of forenames and their phonological realisations. The graphic data come from the birth certificates of thousands of undergraduate students aged seventeen and above, and the phonic data are tape-recordings of GCE examinations results read over the Cameroon broadcasting corporation networks (CRTV). The analysis of the graphic data shows that some forenames were recorded inaccurately by semi-literate civil status officers, who usually spelt names as they were pronounced by parents or by themselves. The analysis of the phonic data does not only replicate the various findings described in recent studies of Cameroon English phonology such as glide formation and vowel epenthesis. It also reveals the widespread use of tonal features in the realisations of pet-names in Cameroon English speech.

Key words: Cameroon English, forenames, New Englishes, pronunciation, spelling

Introduction

This paper examines the way forenames are realised in Cameroon English speech. It first gives background information on Cameroon and then discusses the structure of people's names and the sources and uses of forenames in the country. This is followed by a description of the orthographic representations of these forenames and an analysis of their phonological renderings.

Background information on Cameroon

Cameroon is a Central African country whose variety of English shares a number of features with West African Englishes (Todd, 1982; Gortach, 1998; Schneider, 1998; McArthur, 1999). Its population, estimated at around 16 million people, speaks over 250 living languages (Ethnologue, 2003), including major lingua francas such as Fulfulde in the north, Ewondo in the south and Pidgin English elsewhere, especially in the Southwest and Northwest provinces of the country, formerly known as Southern British Cameroons (Kouega, 2002; 2007a). In addition, the country adopted in 1961 the use of two official languages, namely French and English, the languages of the two ex-colonial masters (Kouega, 1999a). In fact, Cameroon was a German colony in the years 1884-1918; the Germans having lost the First World War, their possessions in Africa were shared between France and Britain. France's portion of German Kamerun was called French Cameroon, where French was made the official language. Britain's portion was called British Cameroons, where expectedly English was made the official language. In 1961, British Cameroons obtained its autonomy and decided to form a federation with French Cameroon, which had obtained its independence in 1960. This led to the introduction of English as the joint official language of the federated country (Neba, 1982). Since then, the Francophone and Anglophone communities have been co-habiting peacefully. This peaceful cohabitation stems from the fact that these two communities have a number of features in common. One of these features is the adoption of European forenames as part of their names, as the ongoing analysis shows.

Structure of people's names and sources and uses of forenames

This section examines the structure of people's names, from which are extracted forenames, whose sources and functions in discourse are considered. As far as the structure of names is concerned, it is observed that the names of Anglophone Cameroonians have a characteristic sequencing consisting of three parts, namely a first surname, henceforth SN1, a forename (FN) and a second surname (SN2). Schematically, this structure can be represented as SN1 + FN + SN2, as instanced by the names *Awanto Josephine Nchang* and *Ewange Delphine Mekang*. Some people place the forename in initial position, yielding FN + SN1 + SN2 as in *Elisabeth Nkuku Tonde* and *Linda Limene Mbene*; this structure is rare in Francophone Cameroon. Other people prefer the forename in final position (SN1 + SN2 + FN) as in *Shidmanka Mofor Evelyn* and *Ayoknso Tambi Lizzy*; this structure prevails in Francophone Cameroon. There is however a small proportion of people in the two communities who prefer two-part names, consisting of the structures FN + SN1 as in *Dorothy Akoh* and *Diana Tah*, SN1 + FN as in *Achu Carine* and *Njijen Nicole*, and SN1 + SN2 as in *Bih Tibah* and *Ntube Mundu*.

Names with two parts are common in many parts of the world, including England as can be illustrated by *Margaret Thatcher*. Those with three parts are also found in many countries, including the USA as shown by *John Fitzgerald Kennedy*. But what is special about Cameroonians' names is that, while in most western cultures names have a stable structure, in Cameroon there is a great deal of mobility within the structure. For example, an individual named "*Tegha Bridget Attia*" may be called on different occasions as *Attia Tegha Bridget*, *Bridget Tegha Attia*, *Bridget Attia Tegha*, or *Tegha Attia Bridget*. When these variations occur in speech, acquaintances have no difficulty in identifying the person referred to; but strangers are often embarrassed. When the changes occur in writing, especially in official documents and certificates, the individual is definitely in trouble: he/she is called upon by the authorities who process official files for various administrative purposes, to provide a *certificate of individuality* (from French "certificat d'individualité") i.e. an affidavit attesting that the various sequences of names occurring on his/her documents refer to one and the same individual (see Kouega, 2007b for details on such loan terms). This does not only cause an unnecessary delay in the processing of files; it entails extra expenses for the purchase of fiscal stamps too. On the other hand, when quoting a Cameroonian writer, a non-informed researcher may choose the wrong name in the sequence. Take for instance the name *Peter Nsanda Eba*, the writer of the novel *The Good Foot*. In some bibliographical lists, this name is entered as *Nsanda, E. P.* as can be seen in Mbangwana (1992: 102). In others, the order is reversed to *Eba, N. P.*, as in Lyonga, N. et al (1993: 193).

The sources of forenames are considered next. A forename is, by definition, the name which precedes the surname in sequence. But because of the unstable nature of the sequencing of Cameroonians' names, forenames may occur at initial position as in *Loveline Mbote Ekame*, medial position as in *Foncha Mary Lum* or final position as in *Bih Nchang Perpetua*, where the constituents *Loveline*, *Mary* and *Perpetua* are regarded in this study as forenames, irrespective of their position in the sequence. This practice of combining African surnames and European forenames is an offshoot of colonisation, which started off with the Germans and culminated with the French and British after World War I, when Cameroon was administered by France and Britain. French forenames were adopted by French-speaking Cameroonians, while English forenames were adopted by their English-speaking compatriots. A close look at the forenames that the latter bear today reveals five interesting facts, namely:

- many English forenames are used in Cameroon, and so are French loan forenames which are well established in Standard English; besides, many other French forenames are borrowed directly from Francophone Cameroon and the French-speaking world;
- Latin words are used as forenames in Cameroon;
- biblical characters' names are used as forenames in Cameroon;

- Standard English abstract words are used as forenames in Cameroon;
- British surnames are used as forenames in Cameroon.

These five points are taken in turn below.

First of all, English-speaking Cameroonians do bear English forenames, such as *Edgar*, *Erica* and *Humphrey* as well as English surnames used as forenames like *Churchill*, *Kennedy* and *Walters*. They also bear integrated French loan forenames such as *Beatrice*, *Clement* and *Justin*. But in addition, they bear French loan forenames borrowed directly from the French-speaking world including French Cameroon such as *Dieudonné*, *Georgette* and *Valerie*. The problem here is not so much with the fact of borrowing French forenames as it is with the consequences of the borrowing. One of these consequences is that a borrowed French forename may conflict with its English equivalent at one level or another. For example, as will be shown below in the section analysing orthography, the resemblance in spelling between the borrowed French forename *Viviane* and its nearest English equivalent *Vivian* has yielded the Cameroon English forename *Vivian*, which is female. Note that while *Viviane*, *Vivian* and even *Vivien* and *Vivienne* are female forenames in Cameroon English, *Vivian* is a male forename in Standard English. Another consequence of the haphazard borrowing of French forenames is gender contrast: just as *Viviane* above is female in Cameroon English while *Vivian* is male in Standard English, so too the French forename *Jean* is male while the English one *Jean* is female. Despite these differences, French *Jean* and English *Jean* co-exist peacefully in Cameroon.

The presence of French loan forenames in Cameroon English can be attributed to two related historical factors. One is the partitioning of German Cameroon between France and Britain after the First World War. The dividing line was drawn without consultation of the natives, and this resulted in the split of traditional tribes hitherto operating as an entity: some members became Anglophone while others were Francophone. But this imposed separation did not affect the traditional set-up of the tribes, whose members continued to interact as before. This continued interaction prepared the ground for the future hybridization of the French and English cultures in Cameroon, which manifests itself today in the use of French forenames in British Cameroon and vice versa.

The other factor is the federation of the two Cameroons in 1961, followed by the unification of the two Federated States in 1972. These events triggered off a strong wave of migrations within the country, with Francophone State workers from the hinterland being posted to the Anglophone part of the country and vice versa. These internal migrations accelerated the hybridization process, which started off among the border tribe members. This process culminated in the setting up in united Cameroon of a national radio network which broadcast in both French and English (Kouega, 1999a)

Secondly some Cameroonians bear Latin-sounding forenames. These words end in the characteristic suffixes -us and -is as in:

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| - Alphonsus | - Chloris |
| - Chrysanthus | - Fidelis |
| - Columbus | - Precedis |
| - Germanus | - Relindis |
| - Romanus | - Vitalis |
| - Sylvanus | |

What is striking about these forenames is not their origin but their scarcity in British English compared with their abundance in Cameroon English. Actually, British colonizers gave Cameroonians some forenames that were not borne by British citizens, or at least they let Cameroonians adopt as their forenames strange words that these Cameroonians thought were English. There are however a number of such words that were available then, and that Cameroonians seem not to have agreed to bear. These include terms like

the following: Camillus, Forturatus, Dionysius, Prochomius, Proclus, Remigius, Euplius and other Saints' names (Catholic Mission, 1981).

Thirdly, certain biblical characters' names were used as forenames. These were drawn mainly from the Old Testament, as can be instanced by:

- Amos
- Ezekiel
- Genesis
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Job
- Joshua
- Zechariah or Zachariah

Other such religious names include *Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Solomon*, to name only these few. Obviously, these names were chosen by the faithful - or proposed to them by British Missionaries - when their children were getting baptised.

Fourthly, some Standard English abstract words are used as forenames. Alongside attested forenames such as *Dawn, Grace, Joy, June, Patience, Prudence*, Cameroonians have added: *Charity, Comfort, Fidelity, Fortune, Justice, Pride, Princely, Promise, Provide, Rejoice, Sunday, Unity* and other such oddities. Into this category can also be included coined forenames like *Joycee* and reportedly sweet-sounding ones like *Benadine, Fidelian, Hostensia, Julinna, Nicholine, Rosaline, Scholastica* and the like. Lastly, Cameroonians adopted surnames as forenames as can be instanced by *Kennedy, Churchill, Walters* and the like. These are scarcely used as forenames elsewhere.

Regarding the uses of forenames, it can be noted that these forenames contribute to the realisation of one important factor in discourse, namely what Halliday (1978: 110) calls "personal tenor". This factor establishes among speakers in a speech event various relationships such as familiarity, intimacy, respect, and seniority. Equals generally address one another by their forenames, such as *Peter, John, Mary*, which indicates familiarity. So do husbands and wives and boy and girl friends, which indicates intimacy. When there is a need to express respect, forenames are never used singly. They are generally preceded in the speech of most Cameroonians by titles such as *Mr., Doctor, Reverend* as in *Mr Peter, Dr John, Reverend Dennis*. This practice contrasts markedly with what obtains elsewhere; in the western world in particular, titles hardly go with forenames, except in religious ceremonial settings, as can be illustrated by "Cardinal Christian", "Reverend Paul", "Sir Harold".

Respect is also indicated by the use of special titles drawn from the kinship domain such as *Pa-, Ma-, Uncle, Auntie, Sister*, etc. These titles are prefixed to the forename of older people as in *Pa John, Ma Cecilia, Uncle David, Auntie Beckie, Sister Deborah*. Failure to use these kinship titles in an interaction will cause the speaker to be taxed with rudeness and impoliteness. This clearly shows that the kin terms used as titles do not indicate family ties, but are mere markers of respect and seniority.

Orthographic representations of forenames

A cursory look at the forenames of Cameroonians as spelt out in their birth certificates and official documents reveals two interesting features. First of all certain forenames are spelt in ways that do not reflect the letter sequences of the targeted English forenames. For example, the forenames *Janet, Maureen, Priscilla* and *Prudence* are generally represented by the following variants:

- Janet:	Jenet, Jannet, Jennet, Jenette, Jeannet, Jennette, Jenneteh and Jeannette;
- Maureen:	Maurine, Morene, Morine, Moureen, Mourin, Mourine;
- Priscilla:	Precilia, Prescilia, Priscillia;
- Prudence	Prodencia, Prodensia, Prudencia, Prudentia.

Secondly, there are a number of words used as forenames whose spellings are not consistent. These include doublets such as Bronhilda/Brunhilda, Emmerencia/Emmerensia, Ebenezer/Ebenazar, Magdaline/Magdelene, Marceline/Maxceline, Pepetua/Perpetua, Veronic/Veronique, Walter/Walters. A closer look at these forenames shows that they are spelt in various ways which can be grouped into five major categories namely omission, addition, substitution, misordering, and finally a combination of the above four processes.

By omission here is meant the leaving out of a letter in a name. The letters which are left out are generally one member of a sequence of two letters, as can be illustrated by the following:

Cameroon English	Standard English	Omitted letter
Benard, Getrude	Bernard, Gertrude	-r- in the sequence -er
Edit	Edith	-h- in the sequence -th
Inocent, Joana	Innocent, Joanna	-n- in the sequence -nn
Mathew	Matthew	-t- in the sequence -tt

Addition, the reverse process, consists in inserting one extra letter into a standard word which is otherwise correctly spelt. Illustrations include:

Cameroon English	Standard English	Inserted letter
Blassius	Blasius	-s
Cathereine, Evelyne, Margarete, Patreick	Catherine, Evelyn, Margaret, Patrick	-e
Juliete, Juliette	Juliet	-(t) e
Priscillia, Wilfried	Priscilla, Wilfred	-i
Rachael	Rachel	-a
Gilles	Giles	-l-

Substitution, on the other hand, refers to the insertion of a letter in place of another letter, as in the pair Cecelia/Cecilia, where the letter -i- is replaced by the letter -e-. Here are a few illustrations:

Cameroon English	Standard English	Substitution of X for Y
Cecelia, Emmaculate, Ketty	Cecilia, Immaculate, Kitty	-e- for -i-
Confort	Comfort	-n- for -m-
Frida	Freda	-i- for -e
Henri	Henry	-i- for -y-
Godfred	Godfrey	-d for -y-
Jenesis	Genesis	-j- for -g
Jenet	Janet	-e- for -a-
Lylian	Lilian	-y- for -i-
Moureen	Maureen	-o- for -a-
Rashel	Rachel	-s- for -c-
Vivian	Vivien	-a- for -e-

Note that in Cameroon, *Vivian* is hardly a male name. This explains why *Vivien* is considered here as its standard equivalent. Unlike the above three processes, which are very productive, misordering involves only a few cases, the most glaring one being the doublet Kevin/Kiven where the two vowel letters -e- and -i- are mixed up.

These four processes, namely omission, addition, substitution and misordering are sometimes combined within the same word. For example, addition occurs twice in the pair Maybelle/Mabel, where the letter -y- and the sequence -le- are inserted in the standard word. Similarly, in the pair Brigid/Bridget, omission of

the letter -d- followed by substitution of -i- for -e- is observed. Below are listed some six illustrations of these combinations:

- addition of -r- and omission of -e-: Dorren/Doreen;
- addition of -h- and substitution of -u-: Gerthrode/Gertrude ;
- addition and addition: Jeannet/Janet; Maybelle/Mabel
- substitution and omission: Jackline/Jacqueline;
- substitution and substitution: Biatrece/Beatrice; Brigid/Bridget; Jackaline/Jacqueline; Vyvian/Vivien; Maurine/Maureen;
- substitution and addition: Dorine/Doren; Eveline/Evelyn, Maurine/Maureen; Merrilyn/Marilyn, Pamilia/Pamela, Teresia/Tereza.

Other words result from the combination of many processes, like the pair Morine/Maureen, where three processes come into play, namely substitution of -o- for -au-, substitution of -i- for -ee-, and addition of final -e-. As a general observation, the letters which are affected by these processes are both vowels and consonants, but while consonant letters tend to be omitted, vowel letters are generally added, substituted and misordered. This finding will be accounted for in the discussion of pronunciation below.

Following the description of these deviant spellings is an attempt to work out their possible causes. One obvious cause is the influence of the French language. Another is spelling pronunciation (see Kouega, 2006). Others are over-generalisation, carelessness and the level of education of the civil status registrars. These are taken up in turn.

First, the French language has contributed to the shaping of English in Cameroon. Many English-speaking Cameroonians have adopted French forenames such as *Marceline*, *Veronique*, *Noël*, etc. Because of the availability of this widespread language, the chances for cognate words to be mixed up are high, as these illustrations show:

Cameroon English	French	Standard English
Confort	Confort	Comfort
Jenette	Jeannette	Janet
Henri	Henri	Henry
Juliette	Juliette	Juliet

Secondly, of the intralingual causes above, pronunciation spelling seems to be most frequent. It is evident from the forenames listed so far that many of them were spelt by civil status registrars in a way close to the pronunciation of these forenames by the children's parents. Pronunciation spelling was used to satisfy three major needs, namely to faithfully record a given pronunciation by the parents, to reproduce new words unknown to the scribes, and to record standard words unknown to the scribes. As the transcriptions below show, the following forenames seem to be a faithful record of parents' pronunciations:

Parents' speech	Scribes' record	Standard word
/benad/	Benard	Bernard
/biatris/	Biatrece	Beatrice
/edit/	Edit	Edith
/getrud/	Getrude	Gertrude
/dʒenet/	Jenet	Janet
/kiven/	Kiven	Kevin
/pamilia/	Pamilia	Pamela

When the parents gave unknown names to their children, the scribes made an effort to record them as best they could. A name containing for instance the syllable /sia/ was written with the sequences of letters

that render that syllable in the language, like **-sia-** (Emerensia, Prudensia), **-cia-** (Emerencia, Prudencia), **-tia-** (Prudentia). Similarly, when the sound /ɔ/ was heard, it was recorded:

- with the letter -o- as in *Bronhilda, Prodenia, Prodensia*;
- or with the letter -u- as in *Brunhilda, Prudencia*.

This explains why today, there exist doublets such as *Bronhilda/Brunhilda, Emerensia/Emerencia* and quadruplets such as *Prudensia, Prudentia, Prodensia* and *Prodenia*.

This same strategy was adopted by the scribes when parents gave their children common forenames whose spelling was not straightforward and was therefore difficult for them to put down accurately. The result today is that spelling and sound are harmonised in many words, as can be instanced by the various forms of the names below:

- Priscilla:	Precilia, Prescilia;
- Maureen:	Maurine, Morene, Mourin, Mourine;
- Janet:	Jannet, Jeannet, Jeannette.

Thirdly, overgeneralisation seems to have produced many errors. Drawing from the existence of words such as *Catherine, Josephine, Geraldine*, many scribes felt that all words ending in the suffix '-ine' were spelt alike. They therefore overlooked exceptions such as *Dorine* (Doreen), *Eveline* (Evelyn), *Rosaline* (Rosalynd).

Fourthly, carelessness seems to underlie the following cases:

- the non-doubling of consonants in names such as *Joana* (Joanna), *Inocent* (Innocent) and *Mathew* (Matthew);
- the doubling of the wrong letter as in *Dorren*
- the addition of unmotivated letters into common names such as *Cathereine* (Catherine), *Evelyne* (Evelyn), *Jannet* (Janet), *Gerthrode* (Certrude), *Maybelle* (Mabel), *Moureen* (Maureen), *Patreick* (Patrick), *Prescillia* (Priscilla), *Rachael*, perhaps based on the analogy with the spelling of "Michael" (Rachel), *Ritta* (Rita), *Wilfried* (Wilfred).

Lastly, it can be hypothesised that the level of education of these scribes was relatively low. On many occasions, they seem to have resorted to pronunciation spelling when parents pronounced certain common words accurately. For instance, the letter -j- is used to represent the sound /dʒ/ in *Jenesis* (Genesis); the letter -e- for the sound /i/ in *Ketty* (Kitty), the letter -k- for the sound /k/ in *Jackline* (Jacqueline), the letter -g- for the sound /dʒ/ in *Brigid* (Bridget). These illustrations are presented in tabular form below:

Parents' pronunciation	Letter (s) chosen by scribes	Scribes' spelling of the words	Standard spelling
/i/	-e-	Cecelia Emmaculate, Ketty, Prescillia	Cecilia, Immaculate, Kitty, Priscilla
/k/	-k-	Jackline	Jacqueline
/dʒ/	-j-	Jenesis	Genesis
/dʒ/	-g-	Brigid	Bridget
/ʃ/	-sh-	Rashel	Rachel

It should be noted here that the damage caused by some of these misspellings is irreparable today: the sound /ʃ/ is used today for both *Rashel* and *Rachel*; the forenames *Brigid, Frida, Emmaculate, Godfred*,

and *Ketty* are given to children today, along side the standard forms *Bridget*, *Freda*, *Godfrey*, *Immaculate* and *Kitty*, which clearly shows that these misspelt forms are new forenames specific to Cameroon.

In short, this section has shown that forenames are usually misspelt: certain letters are omitted (*Benard* for Bernard); replaced (*Cecelia* for Cecilia), added (*Rachael* for Rachel) or misordered (*Kiven* for Kevin), which seem to originate from semi-literacy.

Phonological renderings of forenames

The native variety of English which Cameroonians have been approximating is British English. As RP is the most documented British accent to date, the analysis of the phonological features of forenames will be done in relation to it. These features are grouped under the labels consonantal features, vocalic features, stress patterns and tonal features. There has been little change in the categories that were set up when research work was still at its teetering stage (Kouega, 2001).

Consonantal features

The consonant system of RP and Cameroon English (henceforth CamE) contains just about the same number of sounds, but their distribution is different. The differences can be grouped under labels such as the non-realisation of interdental sounds, the devoicing of specific sounds in certain environments, the replacing of given sounds by others, and the simplification of consonant clusters. The interdentals /θ, ð/ are usually replaced by the alveolars /t, d/ (Simo Bobda, 1994; Kouega, 1999b); the replacement of /θ/ by /t/ is systematic as the realisations of the names “Theodore”, “Catherine”, “Judith” below show. The voiced consonant /z/ is rendered as /s/ in “Joseph”, “Josephine”, “Charles”; so is /v/ pronounced /f/ in “Stephen”, perhaps because of the analogy with “pharmacy”; “graphic”, “epitaph” where the sequence PH is pronounced /f/. The influence of spelling may also account for the rendering of /tʃ/ as /ʃ/ in “Rachel”, /dʒ/ as /g/ in “Giles”, /g/ as /dʒ/ in “Gertrude” and the sequence /ʃə/ as /sia/ in “Patricia”. These are illustrated below:

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Catherine	kæθrɪn	katerɪn
Charles	tʃɑːlz	tʃals
Gertrude	gɜːtrud	/gɛtrut/ occasionally /dʒɛtrɒt/
Giles	dʒaɪlz	gails
Joseph	dʒɔːzɪf	dʒɔsɛf
Josephine	dʒɔːzɪfɪn	dʒɔsɛfɪn
Judith	dʒudɪθ	dʒudit
Patricia	pəˈtrɪʃə	pətrɪsia
Rachel	rɛɪtʃl	rəʃɛl
Stephen	stɪvɪn	stɪfɛn
Theodore	θɪədɔ	tɪɔdɔ

Consonant clusters undergo various processes; they are occasionally merged, as is the case with /ks/ and /gz/ which yield /kz/ as in “Alexander”, “Alexandra”. They may be simplified by way of deletion of one member, especially the yod element, as can be illustrated by “Samuel”. They are more frequently simplified by way of vowel epenthesis: the vowels which usually come into play include /e/ as in “Frederick”, “Catherine”, “Evelyn”, /ɛ/ as in “Michael”, “Stephen”, /a/ as in “Barbara”, “Margaret”, “Susan”:

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Alexander	æliɣzandə	alekzanda
Alexandra	æliɣzandrə	alekzandra
Barbara	babrə	babara
Catherine	kæθrɪn	katerin
Evelyn	ivlɪn	evelin
Frederick	fɹedɹɪk	frederik
Margaret	mɑɣɹɪt	magaret

Michael	maɪkl	maikel
Samuel	sæmjʊəl	samuəl
Stephen	stɪvɪn	stifən
Susan	suzn	suzan

Vocalic features

The vowel system of CamE differs markedly from that of RP. All RP vowels are replaced in the variety by a small set of vocalic sounds which exclude centre vowels and triphthongs. Long and short vowel contrasts are neutralised, which causes, say, the pair /æ, ʌ/ to be rendered as /a/ as in “Albert” and “Barbara”. Centre vowels are replaced by peripheral ones, like /ɜ/ which becomes /ɛ/ in “Gertrude”, “Ernest”, /ʌ/ which becomes /ɔ/ in “Justin”, “Justice” and finally /ə/ which may become /a/ in “Barbara”, /ɛ/ in “Albert”, /i/ in “Emily”, /ɔ/ in “Jacob”, /e/ in “Denise”, /ia/ in “Eleanor”. The front vowel /e/ is tensed to /e/ in most Romance words, like “Emmanuel”, “Emily”, “Denis”.

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Albert	ælbət	albət
Barbara	babrə	babara
Denis	dɛnɪs	denis
Denise	dɛnɪz	deniz
Eleanor	ɛlənə	eliano
Emily	ɛməli	emili
Ernest	ɜnɪst	ɛnɛst
Gertrude	gɜtrud	/getrut/ occasionally /dʒetrət/
Jacob	dʒɛkəb	dʒekəp
Justice	dʒʌstɪs	dʒɔstis
Justin	dʒʌstɪn	dʒɔstin

RP diphthongs are monophthongised, like /eɪ/ which is reduced to /e/ as in “David”, “Grace”; /ɛə/ to /ɛ/ in “Clare”, “Mary” and /ɪə/ to /e/ in “Vera”. New diphthongs are created from vowel letter sequences such as EA pronounced /ia/ as in “Beatrice”, IA pronounced /ia/ as in “Cecilia”, IO pronounced /iɔ/ as in “Lionel”, AO pronounced /aɔ/ as in “Naomi”, IE pronounced /ie/ as in “Daniel”, “Patience” and IU pronounced /iu/ as in “Cornelius”, “Ignatius”:

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Beatrice	bɪətrɪs	biətrɪs
Cecilia	səsɪliə	sisɪliə
Clare	kleə	kle
Cornelius	-	kɔːnelɪəs
Daniel	dæniəl	daniəl
David	dəvɪd	devɪt
Grace	ɡreɪs	ɡres
Ignatius	-	ɪkneɪʃɪəs
Lionel	liənəl	liənəl

Mary	mɛəri	/meri/ occasionally /meri/
Naomi	neɪəmi	naəmi
Patience	peɪʃns	peɪʃɪns
Vera	vɪərə	/vera/ occasionally /vera/

RP triphthongs, which are non-existent in CamE as previous studies (Simo Bobda, 1994; Kouega, 1999b) have attested, are usually realised in this variety in two ways: either as a diphthong or a VCV structure with the C element being a glide. The most common diphthongal realisations include /ai/ as in “Irene” and /iə/ as in “Lionel”. The most frequent glide associated with forenames is /j/ as can be instanced by “Mathias”, “Elias”. The latter process is one of the factors which affect syllabification in CamE. Actually there are a few words whose syllables differ in number in the two varieties. These include, amongst others, “Irene” and “Joan” which contain two syllables each, and “Mathias”, “Elias”, as well as words like “apocope” which contain three syllables each in the CamE variety.

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Elias	ɪlaɪəz	/elajas/ occasionally /elias/
Irene	aɪrɪni	/airen/ occasionally /airin/
Lionel	liənəl	liənəl
Mathias	məθaɪəz	/matajas/ occasionally /matias/

Stress patterns

Forenames constitute a class of words whose stressing does not always follow the same pattern as that of other word classes. This observation was first made by Simo Bobda (1994), who identified some recurrent patterns of “forename stress”. A scrutiny of a large sample of common forenames reveals the following four interesting facts. First, stress is generally placed one or two syllables after its position in RP, as these illustrations show:

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Eunice	¹ Eunice	Eu ¹ nice
Gwendoline (Gwendolyn)	¹ Gwendoline	Gwendo ¹ line
Margaret	¹ Margaret	Marga ¹ ret
Rosemary	¹ Rosemary	Rose ¹ mary

This forward pull of stress is observed even in common words when they are used as forenames like “Comfort”, “Patience”, “Promise”, “Unity” below. In fact, while common words are stressed on the same syllable in both RP and CamE, their forename counterparts are stressed on a later syllable in CamE, as shown below:

Renderings of common words in RP and CamE		Renderings of their forename counterparts in CamE
'comfort		Com'fort
'patience		Pa'tience
'promise		Pro'mise
'unity		U'nity

Secondly, Simo Bobda (1994: 285) observed that “forenames ending in a nasal are usually stressed on the last syllable” as can be illustrated by “Evelyn”, “Helen”, “Jacqueline” and “Susan”. A careful observation of the sample under scrutiny shows that forenames which exist in both English and French tend to be accented in CamE on the last syllable i.e. the same syllable as in the French language which, as was noted above, is dominant in the country (Kouega, 2002). In fact, this shift is induced by French and reinforced by Pidgin English, which have in common that their words are accented on the ultimate syllable. This claim is supported by the data in the table below, where RP, French, CamE and Pidgin English renderings are contrasted:

RP	French	CamE	Pidgin English
'Abraham	Abra'ham	Abra'ham	Abra'ham
'Agatha	A'gathe	A'gatha	A'gatha
'Alice	A'lice	A'lice	A'lice
'Catherine	Cathe'rine	Cathe'rine	Cathe'rina
'Christopher	Chris'tophe	Chris'topher	Chris'topher
'Eleanor	Elea'hore	Elea'nor	Elea'nor
'Evelyn	Eve'line	Eve'lyn	Eve'lyn
'Helen	Hé'lène	He'len	He'lena
'Jacqueline	Jacque'line	Jacque'line	Jacque'lina
'Pamela	Pa'mela	Pa'mela	Pa'mela
'Susan	Su'sanne	Su'san	Su'sanna
'Vivien	Vivi'anne	Vivi'an	Vivi'anna

There are however a few exceptions such as “Angela”, “Barbara” and “Monica”:

RP	French	CamE	Pidgin English
'Angela	An'gèle	'Angela	An'gela
'Barbara	Barba'ra	'Barbara	Barba'ra
'Monica	Mo'nique	'Monica	'Monica

Thirdly, there are a number of suffixes which have a direct influence on forename stress. Two of them, namely -IS- as in “Chloris” and -(I)US- as in “Alphonsus”, “Nazarius” which were already identified by Simo Bobda (1994: 288), systematically shift stress to the preceding syllable. A third one, namely -INE- or -YN- which may be pronounced /in/ as in “Gwendoline” (also “Gwendolyn”) or /ain/ as in “Catherine”, tends to

attract stress to itself. Needless to say, most of the forenames thus ending exist in French and are accented on this same suffix:

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Chloris	-	'Chloris
Fidelis	-	Fi'delis
Precedis	-	Pre'cedis
Vitalis	-	Vi'talis
Alphonsus	-	Al'phonsus
Colombus	-	Co'lombus
Germanus	-	Ger'manus

Nazarius	-	Na'zarius
Caroline	'Caroline	Caro'line
Catherine	'Catherine	Cathe'rine
Gwendoline	'Gwendoline	Gwendo'line
Valentine	'Valentine	Valen'tine

Fourthly, Simo Bobda (ibid, p. 286) observed that “forenames which have a high front vowel as the nucleus of their final syllable tend to receive ultimate stress”, as in the following data:

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Alice	'Alice	A'lice
Bridget	'Bridget	Bri'dget
Doris	'Doris	Do'ris
Eunice	'Eunice	Eu'nice
Jessie	'Jessie	Jes'sie

However there are many exceptions to this rule, as can be attested by forenames such as “Clarice”, “David”, “Dominic”, “Edith”, “Precedis”, “Unity” amongst others:

Forenames	RP renderings	CamE renderings
Clarice	'Clarice	'Clarice
David	'David	'David
Dominic	'Dominic	'Dominic
Edith	'Edith	'Edith
Precedis	-	Pre'cedis
Unity	-	U'nity

Besides, the present corpus reveals that the vast majority of forenames having a high front vowel as the nucleus of their final syllable are pet names such as “Jessie”, “Peggy”, “Sammy”, “Christy”, “Willie” etc. These pet names seem to exhibit a characteristic accentual pattern different from that described so far, as will be shown in the next section.

Tonal features

As was noted above, forenames tend to be used to express familiarity and intimacy. But these relationships are most readily expressed by pet-names, which are generally formed by clipping an existing forename: what is retained may be one of its syllables, most frequently the first one, as can be illustrated by the pet-names *Chris* obtained from *Christopher*, *Dan* from *Daniel*, *Dave* from *David*, *Fred* from *Frederick*, etc. These standard one-syllable pet-names are used in Cameroon English, alongside other new ones, such as “*Be*” from “*Bertrand*” etc:

CamE one-syllable pet name	Obtained from	Forenames
Be	-	Bertrand
Ben	-	Bernard
Del	-	Delphine
Den	-	Denis

Flo	-	Florence
Es	-	Esther
Je	-	Jennet
Jo	-	Joseph
Ju	-	Justine
Vi	-	Vivien, Vivienne, Vivian Vivianne

Occasionally, pet-names may consist of two syllables such as *Alex* obtained from *Alexander*, *Tina* from *Christina*, *Tessa* from *Theresa*. These standard ones co-exist with other Cameroonian forms such as:

CamE two-syllable pet names	Obtained from	Forenames
Ade	-	Adeline
Alphon	-	Alphonsus
Augus	-	Augustine
Bea	-	Beatrice
Bene	-	Bernadette
Caro	-	Caroline
Doro	-	Dorothy
Eve	-	Eveline
Fide	-	Fidelis, Fidelity
Vale	-	Valentine

Very often, two-syllable pet-names undergo a slight modification, with the vowel of the last syllable changing into the suffix -y- or -ie-. This can be instanced by the standard forms *Andy* obtained from *Andrew*, *Paddy* from *Patrick*, *Terry* from *Terence*, *Aggie* from *Agnes*, *Betty* from *Elisabeth*, *Jenny* from *Jennifer*, to name only these few. To these can be added the following Cameroon English creations: “*Bibie*” obtained from “*Beatrice*”, “*Benjy*” from “*Benjamin*” etc.

Bibie	Obtained from	Beatrice
Benjy	-	Benjamin
Cecie	-	Cecilia
Commie	-	Comfort
Charly	-	Charles
Christie	-	Christina

Elie	-	Elisabeth
Gaby	-	Gabriel
Gwendie	-	Gwendoline
Prudie	-	Prudence (Prudencia)

Another suffix which is appended to forenames to form pet-names is the morpheme -S-; it yields the standard form *Babs* obtained from *Barbara* and the new forms *Peps* from *Perpetua* and *Freds* from *Frederick*. A typical Cameroonian formation is the three-syllable pet-name *Emmanu* from *Emmanuel*, which splits a diphthong and retains one of its vocalic elements.

What is interesting about these pet names is not just their formation, but also their phonological realisation: they tend to be pronounced in a characteristic way in speech. To indicate intimacy, speakers systematically pronounce monosyllabic pet names with a rising tone, as shown below:

Pet names	Rising tone	Rendering
Chris	Chrĩs	krĩs
Flo	Flǒ	flǒ
Sue	Sũe	sũ
Vi	Vĩ	vĩ

Similarly, disyllabic pet names take the rising tone on the second syllable and a low tone on the first, as illustrated by *Doro*, *Elec*, *Elie* and *Eve* below. This way of pronouncing pet names seems to be the only one of its kind in the new Englishes.

Pet name	Low tone	Rising tone	Rendering
Doro	dòro	Dorǒ	dòrǒ
Elec	èlek	Elěc	èlěk
Elie	èli	Elĩ	èlĩ
Eve	ève	Evě	èvě

Conclusion

This paper has examined people's names in Cameroon English, with the focus on forenames and pet names. People's names have a three-part structure which generally includes a forename. This forename which occurs in initial, medial or final position in the name sequence, originates from various sources including French, Latin and biblical characters' names. As these forenames were written by semi-educated civil status registrars, they are usually misspelt and some misspellings have produced new forenames specific to Cameroon. The same goes for their pronunciation. Generally, spelling pronunciation is the rule: forenames are pronounced as they are spelt and this causes individual consonant segments to be replaced by others and clusters to be simplified by way of vowel epenthesis. Vowel letters are pronounced as they are spelt, which causes digraphs to be realised as diphthongs, hence the high number of new diphthongs in Cameroon English. Stress tends to be shifted to the ultimate or penultimate syllable, and the pull of stress toward final position in forenames is so strong that even standard words regularly stressed on the initial syllable take ultimate stress when they function as forenames. One fresh observation made is the association of pet names with tonal features, a characteristic that seems to be unique in the literature.

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