



Word Stress in Cameroon English

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1. Aim

- The traditional approach to the study of word stress in varieties of English consisted in listing and classifying these features.
- This presenter, for the past twenty years, has been seeking to understand and expose the innerworks of English word stress. This paper is part of this endeavour.



2. Some data on CamE

- **School and education:** □diploma, □professor, □associate, □semester, □success, co□efficient,
- **Sport:** Indo□mitable Lions, □referee, bi□as, □opponent, se□mi □final, co□veted,
- **Religion:** pro□testant, bi□bblical, a□postolic, spi□ritual



3. Some views on English stress

- Like its segmental pronunciation, the word stress of English is “simple enough in theory” when seen through the phonological rules generating it, but is “highly complex in practice” (Roach 2000: 102).
- The distribution of stress in English is “chaotic”. (Strang 1970: 55)
- A hasty look at English phonology (including word stress) is that “We cannot help” [Dickerson (1978:131)]

3. Some views on English stress (cont'd)



- “For each new word, learn its vowels, its consonants, and its stress pattern.” [(Dickerson, (1978:131)]
- “There is no simple way of knowing which syllable or syllables in an English word must be stressed, but every time you learn another word you must be sure to learn how it is stressed. [O’Connor (1980: 115)]
- “Why is life so stressful?” – humorous title of a chapter of Crystal’s (1984: 84) *Who cares about Usage?*

4. Some issues at hand in this paper

- differing RP *se[m]ester* and [i]n*sinister*
- *The two opposing pressures accounting for the stress difference between words such as RP a[t]omic, e[le]ctric, ge[n]eric on the one hand, and [i]Arabic, A[r]ithmetic, [r]hetoric on the other?*
- *What makes spiritual a unique irregularity in the RP stress system, and what are the possible motivations for this stress pattern?*
- *Considering the RP and CamE stress positions in the derivatives maintain + ance and insure + ance, what accounts for the internal inconsistency, within each variety, and across the two varieties, in RP [i]maintenance and in[s]urance on the one hand, and CamE main[te]nance and [i]nsurance on the other?*

4. Some issues at hand in this paper (cont'd)

- *What are the motivations for the three different stress patterns of safari (ˈsafari, saˈfari, safɑˈri) heard in CamE speech?*
- *What general patterns of stress motivate CamE capiˈtalism?*
- *Why is the stress pattern of CamE (verb) ˈrecord a conspicuous exception in terms of the general rules of word stress in this variety of English?*

5. The notion of constraint as used in this paper



- Appeal (“invitation”) to place stress on a particular syllable on the basis of some features / earlier internalized rules of stress placement.
- NB: The term ‘constraint’ is not quite used in the Optimality (OT) sense and that the analysis offered is not based on OT.



6. Some constraints in RP

- Backward Stress (BWS),
- Antepenultimate Stress constraint (APS)
i.e., third from last
- Heavy Syllable Stress constraint (HSS),
- Noun-Verb Alternation (NVA),
- Base Stress (BS),
- Affix Stress Property (ASP)
- Donor Language Stress (DLS) constraints.



6. Some constraints in RP (cont'd)

■ **Noun-verb stress alternation (NVA)**

- A phenomenon whereby dissyllabic words which can have a noun form and a verb form are generally stressed initially in their noun form and finally in their verb form.

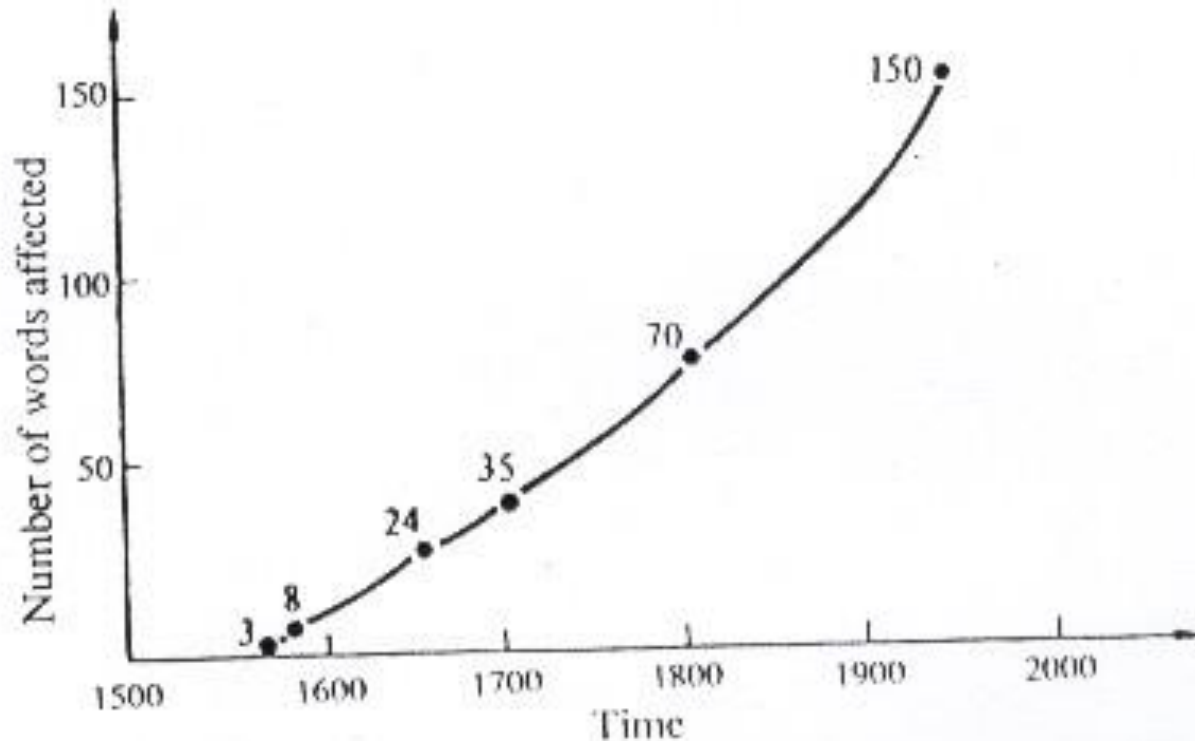
ˌcontract (N) ~ conˈtract (V), ˌconvict ~ conˈvict, ˌdiscount, disˈcount, ˌexport ~ exˈport, ˌtransfer ~ transˈfer, etc.

- The stress alternation in such pairs is usually accompanied by an alternation between a stressed vowel in a stressed syllable and a weak vowel in an unstressed syllable (kɒntrækt ~ kəntrækt, ɛkspɔ:t ~ ɪkspɔ:t)

Watch out for exceptions (import, transport)

6. Some constraints in RP (cont'd)

Graph 1: Stress shift in disyllabic nouns like *rebel* (UK English) [Aitchison 1991: 82]



6. Some constraints in RP

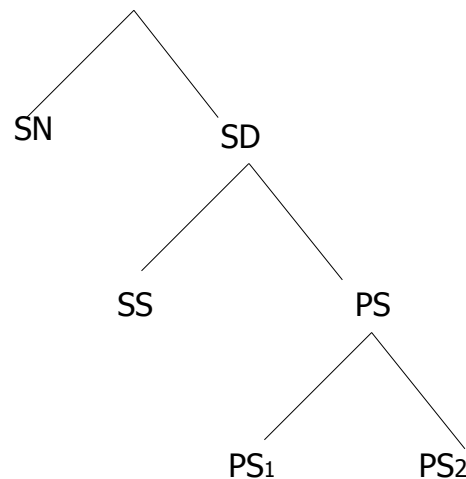
(cont'd)

Affix stress property (ASP)

- Refers to the different ways in which affixes affect the stress patterns of the basis to which they are attached.
- Categories: Stress Neutral (in- in'acurate), do not affect stress in the base to which they are attached; Stress-Determining (SD) affixes.
 - SD affixes are in turn sub-divided into: Self-Stressed (SS) and Pre-Stressed (PS) affixes. The former pull stress onto their first syllable (-ese Congo'lese) and the latter cause stress to fall on a preceding syllable (-ic(s) aca'demic).
 - PS affixes are sub-divided into Pre-Stressed One (PS1) and Pre-Stressed Two (PS2). PS cause stress to fall on the immediately preceding syllable (-ic(s) pho'netics) and PS2 cause stress to fall on the second syllable before them (-tude 'altitude).

6. Some constraints in RP (cont'd)

. Affix stress property tree



SN: (negation prefix): in-, im-, il-, ir-; -ism

SD: -ic, -iVC, -y (philosophy)

SS: -ese, -air(e), -oon, -osis

PS1: -ic (democratic) , -iV, -uV

PS2: -gon, -mony, -tude



6. Some constraints in RP (cont'd)

Donor Language Stress (DLS)

- Refers to the attraction that the stressed pattern of the borrowing language exert on loans, especially the recent ones
- Recent loans from French = final stress e.g.: *e[ˈ]lite*, *la[ˈ]trine*, *po[ˈ]lice*, *bur[ˈ]lesque*,
- From Romance languages (e.g. Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish) = penultimate stress (second from the last) e.g.: in *ver[ˈ]batim*, *maca[ˈ]roni*, *po[ˈ]tato*, *di[ˈ]ploma*,
- from Swahili = penultimate stress e.g.: *Swa[ˈ]hili* itself, *ma[ˈ]tatu* (public transport bus), *ma[ˈ]gendi* (bribe), *Nai[ˈ]robi*, and so on.



7. Some constraints in CamE

- CamE constraints = RP constraints
- Some CamE-specific constraints: **Forward Stress, I-Stress, N-Stress, Final Obstruent Verbal Stress and New Affix Stress Property constraints.**



7. Some constraints in CamE (cont'd)

□ **Forward Stress (FWS) eg**

I-Stress (IS)

Refers to the phenomenon whereby stress tends to fall on the last syllable of a word or a dissyllabic prefix if its final rhyme contains a high front vowel.

curry, petty, Pakistani, Somali, Maggie, Vicki, semi-final, hemisphere, demi-God, amphitheatre, baptist, catechist, typist

N-Stress (NS)

It induces stress placement on the final syllable of a word if this syllable has a final /n/

carton, hormone, Susan, hygiene Catherine, Vivian, Helen vs Augustine, Martin, Benson



7. Some constraints in CamE (cont'd)

□ **Forward Obstruent Verbal Stress (FOVS)**

It causes stress to fall on the final syllable of a verb if it ends with an obstruent, e.g., *embar^orass*, *inter^opret*, *boy^ocott*, *kid^onap*, *solli^ocit*

□ The **New Affix Stress Property (NASP)** : affixes are assigned new stress properties different from the ones they have in older Englishes.

Example:

in- RP (generally SN): *in^oactive*, *in^odifferent* vs CamE (systematically SS) *in^oinactive*, *in^oindifferent*. By extension, the prefix *in-* in all contexts tend to be stressed (eg *in^oquisitive*).

-ism: RP (SN) *bi^olingualism*, *in^ocapitalism*) vs CamE (PS1) *bi^olingu^oalism*, *cap^oitalism*).

-osis : RP (SS) *diag^onosis*, *symbi^oosis* vs CamE (PS1) (eg *di^oagnosis*, *in^osymbiosis*.)



8. Competition

The central argument in this submission is that for any word of more than one syllable, there are generally a number of appeals, based on a range of parameters, for stress to fall on a particular syllable. The range of options is even wider in Outer Circle accents exemplified by CamE., whose stress systems are based both on the Inner Circle Englishes and their own sui generis constraints. While some constraints lead to the same stress placement, others lead to different stress patterns. This is where the notion of competition comes in. The following words are examples of words with ranges of constraints that compete with each other for stress placement:

Capitalism; bulletin; embarrass; incumbent; ingredient; opponent; safari, safari, safari; success.

Constraints and stress options	Remarks
<p><i>capitalism</i> → <i>'capitalism</i> (BWS, BS, ASP) <i>capitalism</i> → <i>capi'talism</i> (APS, FWS, NASP)</p>	<p>ASP: <i>-ism</i> stress-neutral in RP NASP: <i>-ism</i> PS₁ in CamE</p>
<p><i>bulletin</i> → <i>'bulletin</i> (BWS, APS) <i>bulletin</i> → <i>bulle'tin</i> (FWS, IS, NS)</p>	
<p><i>embarrass</i> → <i>'embarrass</i> (BWS, APS) <i>embarrass</i> → <i>em'barrass</i> (FWS, ASP, BS) <i>embarrass</i> → <i>embar'rass</i> (FOVS)</p>	<p>ASP: <i>em</i> -stress-neutral BS: bound base <i>-barrass</i></p>
<p><i>incumbent</i> → <i>'incumbent</i> (BWS, ASP, NASP) <i>incumbent</i> → <i>in'cumbent</i> (ASP, BS, FWS)</p>	<p>NASP: <i>in</i> -self-stressed in CamE</p>
<p><i>ingredient</i> → <i>'ingredient</i> (BWS, APS, NASP) <i>ingredient</i> → <i>in'gredient</i> (ASP, BS, FWS)</p>	<p>NASP: <i>in</i> -self-stressed in CamE ASP: <i>ient</i> PS₁</p>
<p><i>opponent</i> → <i>'opponent</i> (BWS, APS) <i>opponent</i> → <i>op'ponent</i> (BS, FWS)</p>	<p>BS: Cf. <i>oppose</i></p>
<p><i>safari</i> → <i>'safari</i> (BWS, APS) <i>safari</i> → <i>sa'fari</i> (FWS, DLS) <i>safari</i> → <i>safa'ri</i> (FWS, IS)</p>	
<p><i>success</i> → <i>'success</i> (BWS, NVA) <i>success</i> → <i>suc'cess</i> (FWS, DLS)</p>	<p>DLS: Cf. French <i>succès</i></p>



8. Competition

- As constraints conflict, they yield divergent stress patterns.
- Stress placement on a particular syllable suggests that one or more constraints have won, while others have lost. If winning constraints are represented by the + sign, losing constraints by the - sign, and 0 represents inapplicable constraint, then the *constraints matrix* will appear as follows:

8. Competition (cont'd)

CamE stress	Constraints based on existing rules of English							Sui generis constraints						RP Stress
	BWS	APS	NVA	HSS	ASP	BS	DLS	FWS	NASP	FOV S	IS	NS		
<i>cap<i>ι</i>talism</i>	-	+	0	0	-	-	0	+	+	0	0	0	cap <i>ι</i> talism	
<i>bulle<i>ι</i>tin</i>	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	bulle <i>ι</i> tin	
<i>embar<i>ι</i>rass</i>	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	embar <i>ι</i> rass	
<i>in<i>ι</i>cumbent</i>	+	+	0	0	-	-	0	-	+	0	0	0	in <i>ι</i> cumbent	
<i>in<i>ι</i>gredient</i>	+	+	0	0	-	0	0	-	+	0	0	0	in <i>ι</i> gredient	
<i>op<i>ι</i>ponent</i>	-	+	0	0	-	-	0	+	+	0	0	0	op <i>ι</i> ponent	
<i>sa<i>ι</i>fari</i>	+	+	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	-	0	sa <i>ι</i> fari	
<i>sa<i>ι</i>fari</i>	-	-	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	-	0	sa <i>ι</i> fari	
<i>sa<i>ι</i>fari</i>	-	-	0	0	-	-	-	+	0	0	+	0	sa <i>ι</i> fari	
<i>suc<i>ι</i>cess</i>	+	0	+	0	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	suc <i>ι</i> cess	



8. Competition (cont'd)

- Stress placement results from the outcome of a competition between several constraints as seen in the foregoing analyses.
- This outcome is inconsistent with each variety of the language, and across varieties.
- The RP and CamE stress placement on the words 'main'tain + ance', in'sure +ance', and 'pro'test + ant' can attest to this.

8. Competition (cont'd)

	main ₀ tain+ance		in ₀ sure+ance		Pro ₀ test+ant	
constraint	RP	CamE	RP	CamE	RP	CamE
FWS/BS	0/-	+	0/+	-	0/-	+
BWS/APS	+	-	-	+	+	-
NASP	0	0	0	+	0	0
	₀ aintenance	main ₀ tenance	in ₀ surance	₀ insurance	₀ protestant	pro ₀ testant

8. Competition (cont'd)

Word	Stress	RP	CamE
		Stress property	Stress property
<i>apostolic,</i> <i>economic(s),</i> <i>fanatic</i> <i>phonetic(s),</i> <i>scientific</i> <i>demagogic,</i> <i>pedagogic,</i> <i>democratic;</i> <i>academic,</i> <i>epidemic</i>	<i>aposɪtolic,</i> <i>ecoɪnɒmɪk(s),</i> <i>fəɪnætɪk</i> <i>phoɪnetɪk(s),</i> <i>sciɪntɪfɪk</i> <i>demaɪgɒdʒɪk,</i> <i>peɪdɑgɒdʒɪk,</i> <i>demoɪkrætɪk;</i> <i>əkædɪmɪk,</i> <i>epɪdɛmɪk</i>	PS1	<i>Aɪræbɪk,</i> <i>heɪrɛtɪk</i> <i>reɪtɔrɪk,</i> <i>ʧoɪlərɪk,</i> <i>luɪnætɪk,</i>
<i>Arabic, choleric,</i> <i>heretic, lunatic,</i> <i>rhetoric</i>	<i>ɪræbɪk, ɪʧoɪlərɪk,</i> <i>ɪherɛtɪk, ɪlunætɪk,</i> <i>ɪrhetɔrɪk</i>	PS2	<i>əpɒstɒlɪk,</i> <i>eɪkɒnɒmɪk(s), ɪfænætɪk,</i> <i>ɪfhoɪnetɪk(s),</i> <i>sciɪntɪfɪk</i> very often <i>deɪmɑgɒdʒɪk,</i> <i>peɪdɑgɒdʒɪk,</i> <i>deɪmɒkrætɪk;</i> sporadically <i>əkædɪmɪk, epɪdɛmɪk</i>



Conclusion

- 1. English word stress strategies for Cameroonian L2 users of English definable to a large extent**
- 2. CamE has a number of sui generis constraints that make its stress pattern sound different from RP's in some cases.**
- 3. Word stress in Cameroon English is determined by one or more winning constraints.**
- 4. Word stress placement strategies used by CamE speakers are fairly simple and strikingly innovative.**
- 5. Word stress placement strategies can be analysed outside the prism of mother tongue interference.**



Conclusion (cont'd)

6. **Some puzzles/unanswered questions:** why do the speakers say *carˈton, moˈron, maraˈthon* (N-Stress constraint), but ˈ*pardon* (not **parˈdon*)? Why *anˈcestor* (Heavy Syllable Stress), but not *seˈmester* (which would conform with RP) and not *barˈrister, carˈpenter, miˈnister* as in the Caribbean (Wells 1982: 583)?. Why (verb) ˈ*record* (not *reˈcord*) in violation of the local Forward Stress strategy, but more noticeably the Noun-Verb Alternation which applies in so many other cases? Why (noun and verb) ˈ*deposit*, not the expected *depoˈsit* for the verb forms in keeping with the Noun-Verb Alternation and Final Obstruent Verbal Stress constraints?



Appendices

Practice exercises

You may use the abbreviations, which are:

APS: Antepenultimate Stress

ASP: Affix Stress Property

BWS: Backward Stress

BS: Base Stress

DLS: Donor Language Stress

FWS: Forward Stress

IS: I-Stress

NASP: New Affix Stress Property

NS: N-Stress

1. Identify the constraints in competition for stress placement in the following words (a) in RP and (b) in CamE speech and give the stress options that these constraints suggest.



Appendices (cont'd)

Examples:

Calvinism (RP): BWS → □Calvinism; APS → Cal□vinism; ASP → □Calvinism

(CamE): BWS → □Calvinism; FWS → Cal□vinism; APS → Cal□vinism; NASP → Cal□vinism

Hygiene (RP): BWS → □hygiene

(CamE): BWS → □hygiene; FWS → hy□giene; IS → hy□giene; NS → hy□giene

List of words:

applause, challenge, curry, inactive, moron, orchestra, synopsis

Appendices (cont'd)

2. Indicate in the “plus” (+) column the winning constraints and in the “minus” (–) column the losing constraints for the following stress patterns in RP or CamE, or any other variety where constraints have been identified. Examples:

RP stress pattern	+	–		CamE stress	+	–
ˈspiritual	BWS, BS, APS	ASP		ˈsuccess	BWS, NVA	FWS
conˈversant	BS	BWS/APS		diˈagnosis	APS, NASP	ASP
ˈprecedence	BWS, APS	BS		ˈumbrella	BWS, APS	DLS
exˈtent	BS	NVA		capitˈalism	APS, NASP	ASP, BWS
Gaboˈnese	ASP	BWS/ APS, ASP		matˈtress	FWS	BWS/APS
diˈploma	DLS	BWS/APS		Petˈty	IS	BWS
seˈmester	HSS	BWS/APS		insuˈlin	NS	BWS



Appendices (cont'd)

Now ask students to try their skills with these ones

RP stress pattern	+	-		CamE stress	+	-
as[sassin				pe[ttrol		
se[mester				a[dolescence		
[ancestor				[impatient		
pho[netic				marathon		
con[cubinage				ca[lendar		
[capitalism				bulle[tin		
[Arabic				embar[rass		
Tanza[nia				com[ment (vb)		



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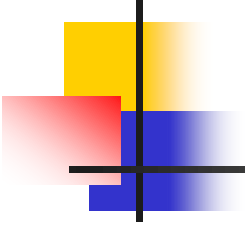
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Thank you for listening.