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, coefficient,

- **Sport:** Indomitable Lions, referee, bias, opponent, semi-final, coveted,

- **Religion:** protestant, biblical, apostolic, spiritual
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 *semester* and *sinister*

- The two opposing pressures accounting for the stress difference between words such as RP *atomic*, *electric*, *generic* on the one hand, and *Arabic*, *Arithmetic*, *Rhetoric* 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 *maintenance* and *insurance* on the one hand, and CamE *mainenance* and *insurance* 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 (safari, safare, safarí) heard in CamE speech?

- What general patterns of stress motivate CamE capitalism?

- Why is the stress pattern of CamE (verb) record 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.

  - contract (N) ~ con\(\text{tract}\) (V), convict ~ con\(\text{vict}\), discount, dis\(\text{count}\), export ~ ex\(\text{port}\), transfer ~ trans\(\text{fer}\), 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 (k\(\text{ontrækt}\) ~ k\(\text{æntrækt}\), eks\(\text{pɔːt}\) ~ ɪksp\(\text{ɔːt}\))

**Watch our for exceptions** (import, transport)
Graph 1: Stress shift in disyllabic nouns like *rebeld* (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'a'curate), 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.: *élite, latrine, pollice, burlesque*,
  - From Romance languages (e.g. Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish) = penultimate stress (second from the last) e.g.: in *verbatim, macaroni, potato, diploma*,
  - from Swahili = penultimate stress e.g.: *Swahili* itself, *matatu* (public transport bus), *magendi* (bribe), *Nairobi*, 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)**
  
  **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, Pakista[ni], Soma[lí], Mag[gie], Vi[cky], se[mi]-final, he[misphere, de[mi]-God, am[phitheatre, bap[tist, cathe[chist, ty[pist

  **N-Stress (NS)**
  It induces stress placement on the final syllable of a word if this syllable has a final /n/

  *carton, hor[mone, Su[san, hyg[iene, Cathe[rine, Vivi[an, He[len vs Au[gu[stine, [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∥rass, inter∥pret, boy∥cott, kid∥nap, soli∥cit*

- 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∥active, in∥different* vs CamE (systematically SS) *in∥active, in∥different*. By extension, the prefix *in-* in all contexts tend to be stressed (eg. *in∥quisitive*).

–*ism*: RP (SN) *bi∥lingualism, ca∥capitalism* vs CamE (PS1) *bi∥lingualism, ca∥talism*.

–*osis*: RP (SS) *di∥agnosis, symbi∥osis* vs CamE (PS1) (eg. *di∥agnosis, symbi∥osis*.)
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 option is even wider in Outer Circle accentss exemplified by CamE., whose stress systems are based both on the Inner Circle Englishes and their own sui generic 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:

Capiťtalism; bulleťtin; embarďrass; Ćincumbent; Ćingredient; Ćopponent; Ćsafari, saťfari, safăři; Ćsuccess.
Contrasts and stress options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Stressed音節</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>capitalism</td>
<td>BWS, BS, ASP</td>
<td>'capitalism'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bulletin</td>
<td>FWS, IS, NS</td>
<td>'bulletin'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embarrass</td>
<td>FWS, ASP, BS</td>
<td>'embarrass'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incumbent</td>
<td>BS, FWS</td>
<td>'incumbent'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingredient</td>
<td>BS, FWS</td>
<td>'ingredient'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opponent</td>
<td>BS, FWS</td>
<td>'opponent'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>safari</td>
<td>FWS, IS</td>
<td>'safari'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success</td>
<td>FWS, DLS</td>
<td>'success'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ASP: -ism stress-neutral in RP

NASP: -ism PS₁ in CamE

ASP: em-stress-neutral
BS: bound base -barrass

NASP: in-self-stressed in CamE

NASP: in-self-stressed in CamE

ASP: ient PS₁

BS: Cf. oppose

DLS: Cf. French succès
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CamE stress</th>
<th>Constraints based on existing rules of English</th>
<th>Sui generis constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BWS</td>
<td>APS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capitalism</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bulletin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embarrass</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incumbent</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingredient</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opponent</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>safari</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>safari</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>safari</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>CamE</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>CamE</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>CamE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FWS/BS</td>
<td>0/–</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0/+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0/–</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWS/APS</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>main ten ance</th>
<th>in sure ance</th>
<th>Pro test ant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maintenance</td>
<td>insurance</td>
<td>protestant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Competition (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>CamE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>apostolic, economic(s), fanatic phonetic(s), scientific demagogic, pedagogic, democratic; academic, epidemic</td>
<td>apostolic, economic(s), fanatic phonetic(s), scientific demagogic, pedagogic, democratic; academic, epidemic</td>
<td>PS1</td>
<td>Arabic, choleric, heretic, lunatic, rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic, choleric, heretic, lunatic, rhetoric</td>
<td>Arabic, choleric, heretic, lunatic, rhetoric</td>
<td>PS2</td>
<td>PS2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Property: PS1, PS2
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 *carton, moron, marathon* (N-Stress constraint), but *pardon* (not *pardon*)? Why *ancestor* (Heavy Syllable Stress), but not *semester* (which would conform with RP) and not *barrister, carpenter, minister* as in the Caribbean (Wells 1982: 583)? Why *(verb) record* (not *record*) 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) deposit*, not the expected *deposit* for the verb forms in keeping with the Noun-Verb Alternation and Final Obstruent Verbal Stress constraints?
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 → Calvineism; APS → Calvineism; ASP → Calvineism

(CamE): BWS → Calvineism; FWS → Calvineism; APS → Calvineism; NASP → Calvineism

Hygiene (RP): BWS → hygiene

(CamE): BWS → hygiene; FWS → hygine; IS → hygine; NS → hygine

List of words:
applause, challenge, curry, inactive, moron, orchestra, synopsis
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RP stress pattern</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>−</th>
<th>CamE stress</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>−</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spiritual</td>
<td>BWS, BS, APS</td>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>success</td>
<td>BWS, NVA</td>
<td>FWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conversant</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>BWS/APS</td>
<td>diagnosis</td>
<td>APS, NASP</td>
<td>ASP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>precedence</td>
<td>BWS, APS</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>umbrella</td>
<td>BWS, APS</td>
<td>DLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extent</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>NVA</td>
<td>capitalism</td>
<td>APS, NASP</td>
<td>ASP, BWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabonese</td>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>BWS/APS, ASP</td>
<td>mattress</td>
<td>FWS</td>
<td>BWS/APS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diploma</td>
<td>DLS</td>
<td>BWS/APS</td>
<td>pettity</td>
<td>IS</td>
<td>BWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semester</td>
<td>HSS</td>
<td>BWS/APS</td>
<td>insulin</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>BWS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendices (cont’d)

Now ask students to try their skills with these ones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RP stress pattern</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>–</th>
<th>CamE stress</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>–</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assassin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>petrol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>adolescence</td>
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<tr>
<td>ancestor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>impatient</td>
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<tr>
<td>phonetic</td>
<td></td>
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<td>marathon</td>
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<tr>
<td>concubinage</td>
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<td>calendar</td>
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<tr>
<td>capitalism</td>
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<td>bulletin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td></td>
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<td>embarass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>comment (vb)</td>
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</table>
References


Thank you for listening.