

Cameroon English Accent in a Diasporic Context: Perceptions of ESL Cameroonian Teachers in Thailand

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APA Citation:

Enyiawah, B.A., & Ambele, E. A. (2023). Cameroon English accent in a diasporic context: Perceptions of ESL Cameroonian teachers in Thailand. *Journal of English Language and Linguistics*, 4(1), 61-78.

<https://doi.org/xxxxx>

Received: June 12, 2023

Accepted: June 21, 2023

Published: June 30, 2023

Abstract

This study investigated the accent attitudes of 52 ESL Cameroonian teachers in Thailand towards Cameroon English (CamE) accent. Motivated by the desire to know more about the treatment that CamE accent receives among the Cameroonian community in Thailand, an aspect that had hitherto received little attention, a matched-guise technique and a language attitude questionnaire were used to investigate the phenomenon of linguistic prejudice among the participants. Semantic differential scales, descriptive statistical processing, and thematic analyses were employed to process and interpret the data. Overall, the results showed participants' positive attitudes towards CamE accents. The participants reported that mutual intelligibility and authenticity prevail over language purism, indicating that CamE accents are gaining more recognition even in the diaspora and can stand as an autonomous accents given the global role/uses of English as an international language. This implies that non-native speakers should not be stigmatized or feel linguistically insecure because of their accents since attitudinal judgments are more a result of linguistic prejudices.

Keywords: Cameroon English, Diasporic context, English accent, ESL teachers, Linguistic prejudice, Thailand

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Introduction

In most postcolonial settings where English is used as a second or foreign language, such as Cameroon and Thailand, respectively, the linguistic landscape is always very complex. In these contexts, most speakers have a first language before coming into contact with English - their second or foreign language. With the existence of different varieties of English, there are variations of the English accents of speakers depending on their sociolinguistic backgrounds (Ambele, 2020). Thus, language ideologies and attitudes emerge among users of a language resulting in the users' covert and/or overt preferences of certain English accent variety over another based on such attitudes (Galloway & Rose, 2018). Despite the emphasis on the necessity of language attitudes study in English as a second or foreign language setting given the global status of English, the voices of Cameroonians (working as ESL teachers) in an EFL context like Thailand remain relatively scarce. The notion of Global Englishes (Ges) is today used to describe the emergence and existence of new English varieties (Ambele, 2020; Fang, 2019; Rose & Galloway, 2019), as GEs advocates for an equally recognizable status of these other Englishes (e.g. Cameroon English and Thai English varieties) alongside the native English varieties (e.g. British and American Englishes). English is now adopted, adapted, and appropriated according to local needs, and is 'cooperating' with local languages in expressing the culture, cosmic vision, and identity of the context (Mbangwana, 2008; Ngefac & Bami, 2010; Schneider, 2016). According to Schneider (2016), the language has 'grown local roots' according to its specific ecological and socio-cultural realities. As a result, each community where English is used now has its own type of English (e.g. Indian English, Singaporean English, Thai English, and Nigerian English). Cameroon English, like any of the other Englishes, carries its own distinctive lexical and phonological features. These different English varieties clearly show considerable phonological deviations from the traditional native British and American Englishes. This explains why GEs researchers have advanced that each English variety should be accepted and treated uniquely in their own right (D'Angelo, 2014; Jenkins, 2007; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Seidlhofer, 2011). Since their origin, these new English varieties have aroused many linguistic and sociolinguistic concerns that have triggered different attitudes towards non-native Englishes than traditional native varieties, especially when users of a particular variety seem to still hold tight to their own accent variety, in particular, even in diasporic contexts where adaptation is a possibility.

Of recent, Thailand has been a preferred work destination for many Cameroonians who travel to the country mainly to work as ESL teachers. Thailand thus presents a rich environment with the possibility of English language adaptations to serve local communication needs; implying that

such Cameroonian teachers expect to adapt or adopt the accent of other foreigners in the Thai context, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds, in communicating in English. Even with many years of living and working in Thailand, most of these Cameroonians have been observed to still uphold their Cameroonian English accent (in-and-out of the classroom) when communicating in English despite assumptions that they might still have certain prejudicial tendencies towards CamE accent and/or its users. Motivated by this curiosity, the present research focuses specifically on ESL Cameroonian teachers in Thailand's perceived English accent attitudes towards Cameroon English. Accent has been described as a salient indicator of foreignness and speakers' judgment (Ambele, 2020). Thus, the paper aims to explore the attitudes of such ESL Cameroonian teachers in Thailand towards CamE accent as they engage in interactions in English to see whether (or not) they portray any prejudicial attitudes towards the accent and/or its speakers.

Based on this aim, the following research question was established: How do ESL Cameroonians in Thailand perceive their use of Cameroon English, and whether (or not) they hold any prejudicial attitudes to the accent and/or its speakers?

Literature Review

1. *Cameroon English (CamE)*

Cameroon English is the variety of English spoken in Cameroon. It is that variety of English that averagely educated Cameroonians use in their formal interactions (Ngefac, 2010; Schneider, 2007). Cameroonians use CamE to better express their Cameroonian identity than other languages that are spoken and used in this context (Ambele, 2020); thus, Cameroonians would find it easier to use and understand CamE accent when compared to other accents. Simo-Bobda and Mbangwana (1993, pp. 199-200) identified what constitutes CamE and its speakers:

The term Cameroon English (or Cameroon Standard English) is meant to contrast with four main kinds of speech. First, it stands in contrast to Pidgin English widely used in Cameroon. Second, it stands in contrast with the speech of uneducated speakers of English. That is why it is often synonymous with educated English. Previous writers (e.g. Masanga, 1983) tend to situate CamE between the speech of secondary school leavers and that of university graduates. CamE further contrasts with the speech of francophone Cameroonians; some of these speakers may have a high command of English, but they are regarded as users of a performance variety and can hardly serve as a reference. Finally, the term Cameroon English excludes

the speech of some Cameroonians who have been so influenced by other varieties of English (British and American Englishes, etc.) that they can no longer be considered representative of the English spoken in Cameroon.

From the above observation, CamE is therefore considered as one of the new Englishes within the GEs paradigm like South African and Nigerian Englishes, with clear phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and even pragmatic distinctions from the traditional native varieties (although attitudes to its authenticity differ) (Ngefac, 2010; Schneider, 2016). Cameroon English distinguishes itself from the other forms of Englishes by the fact that it accommodates many artifacts of the Cameroonian culture at different linguistic levels.

2. English Accent Attitudes

Attitude on accent is one vital area of research in the study of English as a global language (Lippi-Green, 2012). Accent forms an important aspect in the use of a second or foreign language and exerts the greatest influence on (culture-based) attitudes (Jenkins, 2007). The act of identifying boundaries between different accents, though, is not an easy task. For example, Moyer (2013) broadly describes accent to mean the articulation of individual sounds, or parts as well as suprasegmental characteristics. Accent, therefore, refers to the way of pronouncing the words of a language that shows which part of the country, area, or social class a person comes from; it is the manner of speaking; the phonetics of a social dialect (Lippi-Green, 2012).

An accent is one of the aspects that marks a sharp distinction among varieties of English so much so that if one talks about American English and British English, it is more because they are articulated differently than because they have divergent semantic principles and grammatical rules. One must therefore understand, however, that accent is indeed a rather complicated issue and there are no mutually agreed definitions of accent, especially from an ELF perspective. Research on accent attitude started gaining prominence in the early 1960s when Lambert and his associates used the matched-guise technique to investigate listeners' evaluative reactions to English and varieties of French spoken in Montreal. Accent attitude studies have been shown in research to affect a listener's judgment of a speaker's background, intellect, ability, and character. Referring to differences of accent in Britain, Honey (2000) quoted the playwright George Bernard Shaw in 1912 who said that "it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making another Englishman hate or despise him" (p. 1). This depicts the antagonism that accent can generate in a speech community. This contention can better be analyzed and understood within the framework

of sociolinguistics in general and language attitude in particular. In a speech, speakers can alter the way they articulate words and create particular impressions, thus, assigning to themselves a number of stereotypes that are likely to arouse predictable reactions. Studies on accents over the years have shown how important the notion is in the evaluation of peoples' behavior during interactions. Though most of the time unconscious, accent is one of the first criteria people use in evaluating those they meet, irrespective of context (Fang, 2019; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). Such situations where accents are reported to be the determining factor of a listener's perception of an interlocutor abound in many studies (Garrett, 2010; Jenkins, 2009; McKenzie, 2010).

3. Linguistic Prejudice

Prejudice is an unjustified negative attitude towards an individual based solely on that individual's membership in a group (Lippi-Green, 2012). Linguistic prejudice is a psycho-linguistic expression used to refer to the dislike and/or preference that a speaker or a group of speakers may exhibit about a particular language and/or any aspect of it or its speakers (Bhatia, 2017; Quasthoff, 2020; Wodak, 2008). It also denotes the preconceived ideas that are held by speakers of a language about speakers of the same/other varieties of that language or different languages. In this sense, Kirkpatrick (2007) observes that "we are all likely to be linguistically prejudiced in some way, positively or negatively" (p. 14). That is, people usually hold a prior impression of many of their interlocutors, solely on the basis of the language they use.

Giles and Powesland (1975, cited in Kirkpatrick, 2007) carried out a study on accent rating by school children in Britain, including the educated RP accent and many other accents in the country. The researchers discovered that while the speakers with an RP accent were considered intelligent and competent, those with other accents like that of Birmingham were judged the least intelligent. On the other hand, people with similar accents, whether 'intelligent' or not thought they were honest and warm to one another. This thus portrays a unifying function of language in that people feel much more comfortable and will readily unite with those with whom they share a language or a variety of a language. Similarly, some speakers also exhibit a set of stereotypes to non-native speakers of the language especially when the latter deviate a great deal from the native variety. This is what is revealed in a study by Niedt (2011). He investigates the extent to which native speakers of American English associate specific personal qualities to native speakers of Arabic based solely on auditory information. The findings reveal that stereotypes and prejudices are drawn out through linguistic interactions; it is based on an individual's speech almost exclusively that he/she is evaluated on. This situation further shows how languages in general and accents, in

particular, are bound to be subjected to prejudices, irrespective of their nature and origin. To further add insights to this ongoing discourse in yet a perspective that not many studies have delved into, the current study examines the judgment of non-native speakers in the diaspora towards their own local English language variety with respect to accent.

Research Objectives

To investigate the accent attitudes of ESL Cameroonian teachers in Thailand towards Cameroon English (CamE) accent

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method design using a matched-guise technique and a semi-structured language attitude questionnaire with open-ended questions to generate qualitative data as the participants had to justify their attitudes.

1. Participants

The participants who voluntarily took part in this survey were 52 ESL Cameroonian teachers in Thailand (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participants' Information

Sex	Frequency	Age range	Frequency	Linguistic background	Frequency
Male	23	20-25	18	Monolingual	0
Female	29	26-30	30	Bilingual	5
		31-35	4	Multilingual	47
Total	52		52		52

The participants have all been living and working in Thailand as ESL teachers for at least two years. They were chosen based on certain criteria: (i) they are Cameroonian ESL teachers in Thailand; (ii) they have been using English and exposed to other varieties of the English language since childhood; and (iii) they have been interlocutors to a speaker/user of CamE accent and/or are themselves users of the accent. Through purposive and snowball sampling (Milroy & Gordon, 2008) the participants were contacted through the researchers' network of Cameroonian teachers in Thailand to represent a sample of the Cameroonian population in this context whose knowledge on CamE accent warrants them to express attitudes of some sort to the accent variety that they use. The participants were separated into two groups of 26 members each. To the first group, a matched-

guise technique was used while a language attitude questionnaire was administered to the second. These two methods were direct and indirect in nature (see 4.2), and their combination in this study was hoped to effectively bring out the participants' attitudes towards the CamE accent.

2. Instruments and Data Collection Procedure

Methods of obtaining data on language attitudes are numerous in sociolinguistics, however, in this study, both the matched-guise technique and a language attitude questionnaire were used for data collection. The study consisted of two main phases.

The first phase was the experiment with the matched-guise technique. In a place and time suitable for the participants, the researchers got the first 26 teachers to listen to three speakers' voices that have been recorded in order to identify which of the accents in Cameroon the speakers use and also, to evaluate the personality of the speakers based on the recording. The participants rated the speakers on three different accents in Cameroon: (a) the official standard English (SE), (b) Cameroon English (CamE) and, (c) Cameroon Francophone English (CamFE). Each listener-participant was given three copies of a form on which to evaluate each of the speakers' voices. Each voice was played once, and the participants were given enough time to complete all their ratings for this voice. The ratings were made on a five-point scale whose endpoints were described by adjectives (adopted from Tinto, 2018) that are opposites indicating the degree to which the listener-participants associated the voices with a particular accent and speaker personality trait. Based on Tinto (2018), 12 pairs of opposite adjectives were listed on each form for the listener-participants to rate (see Table 5) based on the perceived impression they had of the speakers' accents.

In the second phase, a four-part online language attitude questionnaire was administered to the 26 other participants who did not take part in the matched-guise through google docs, in order to address three main issues: (1) whether they are aware of the multiplicity of English accents in Cameroon, (2) their perceptions of CamE accents, and (3) their reactions when using and/or confronted with other users of this accent in the diaspora. The first part of the questionnaire was based on their demographic and linguistic information. In part two, the participants had to indicate their estimation of the number of English accents that they can identify in Cameroon on a range of three. Part three sought to elicit the participants' perceptions of CamE, while in part four, the participants were asked to write about their reactions toward CamE's accent and/or its speakers.

3. Data Analysis

The semantic differential scale as elaborated by Osgood (1964) and other scholars after him (Friborg et al., 2006; Golubović & Sokolić, 2013) was used to analyze the matched-guise data. Here, the participants' responses were tabulated by marking a tick on the blank at each space on the scale for each speaker's accent and personality trait. By this, the researchers were able to see the extent to which each trait is associated with each of the accents. Then the number of marks at each space was multiplied by the value of that space (from 1 to 5). The results were then totaled. This value was divided by the total number of listener-participant. The obtained results were then subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using percentages. That is, the results represent the score of a particular accent on a five-point scale regarding the accents and personality trait evaluation of speakers of the CamE accent.

Meanwhile, the questionnaire data were assigned a logical scale of values to the variables. The participants' answers were converted to numbers, coded, and entered into a Microsoft Excel file for statistical processing. For consistency, data range and validation checks were performed in SPSS version 21.0 (IBM Inc., 2012) to identify invalid codes. The researchers used the percentage count procedure, i.e. the frequency of responses to a particular question ($X\%$) from the division of the number of responses to the question (P) per the total number of the score (T), and the quotient was then multiplied by one hundred. When the participants' attitudes were all scored, the results for each question were calculated. The information collected was then quantitatively analyzed with respect to the above-mentioned method. However, open-ended questions required a qualitative analysis. Thus, thematic analysis was used to contextually analyze the teachers' responses. The findings were then summarized in code-grounding quotation tables.

Results

The findings in this section are presented based on the three issues investigated in the study: ascertaining ESL Cameroonian teachers' in Thailand awareness of the plurality of English accents in Cameroon (4.1), their perceptions of CamE accent (4.2), and their reactions to CamE accent speakers (4.3).

1. Ascertaining Awareness of Accent Plurality in Cameroon

Given that the current study sought to explore the attitudes of ESL Cameroonians teachers' towards CamE accent –an accent variety in Cameroon that they have been observed to use in Thailand even after years of stay in the diaspora (Ambele, 2020), information on their awareness of the multiplicity of English accents in Cameroon was first necessary. Thus, the participants were asked to identify the number of English accents that they know exist in Cameroon. The findings of this are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Approximations of English Accents in Cameroon

No. of English accents	Frequency	Percentage
One	0	0.0
Two	9	34.6
Three	8	30.8
Four	9	34.6
Total	26	100

Table 2 shows the participants' estimations of the number of English accents present in Cameroon. With the prevailing bilingualism policy in English and French, and the widespread use of the lingua franca, Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE), some of the participants (34.6%) think that there are only two English accents in Cameroon (i.e. SE and CPE accents). However, the majority of the participants (65.4%) believe that there are more than two English accents in Cameroon given the manner in which English is now being used in the country to serve different local and global needs.

2. Participants' Perceptions of CamE Accent

In order to probe into the participants' perceptions of CamE accent, the participants were asked three fundamental questions: (1) whether CamE accent is as beautiful as other accents in terms of how it sounds to the ears (see Table 3), (2) if they found CamE accent easy to learn and use compared to other accents (see Table 4), and (3) what their evaluations are of the personality of different voices of speakers using different English accents in Cameroon (see Table 5).

Table 3*On CamE Accent Beauty*

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	14	53.9
No	8	30.8
Unsure	4	15.3
Total	26	100

Table 3 shows the participants' perceptions of CamE with respect to its aesthetic value; whether the melody of how CamE accent sounds to their ears is an enchanting one or not. As the results show, 53.9% of the participants feel the CamE accent is beautiful while 30.8% expressed displeased attitude. The remaining 15.3% of the participants expressed neutrality in their (dis)like for CamE accent. This means that although most of the participants have a good impression of CamE accent beauty, a considerable proportion of the participants do not seem to agree.

Table 4 illustrates the participants' perception of CamE accent complexity.

Table 4*On CamE Accent Complexity*

Responses	Percentage count	Percentage
Yes	21	80.8
No	4	15.4
Unsure	1	3.8
Total	26	100

The focus here was whether it is easy to learn and/or imitate the CamE accent (or not). A vast majority of the participants (80.8%) say it is easy to learn the CamE accent. This is possible because, unlike the official SE variety accent, CamE has relatively fewer rules (Ambele, 2020; Atechi, 2015). This logically makes CamE a lot easier to learn. However, 15.4% think otherwise while 3.8% had a neutral stance towards the complexity of the CamE accent.

Table 5 shows the results of the participants' evaluation of the three speakers' voices from the matched-guise test.

Table 5*Evaluating Speakers' Personality from Voice*

Traits	Voice 1- official SE accent	Voice 2- CamE accent	Voice 3- CamFE accent
Educated-uneducated	3.88	3.76	3.76
Honest- dishonest	3.23	3.38	3.07
Physically attractive- physically-unattractive	2.88	3.11	3.19
Ambitious- unambitious	3.26	3.19	3.15
Hardworking- lazy	3.38	2.76	2.76
Friendly- unfriendly	3.38	3.42	3.19
Intelligent-unintelligent	4.96	3.42	3.26
Humble- proud	3.15	3.42	3.07
Reliable- unreliable	3.07	3.23	3.07
Polite-impolite	3.5	3.19	3.65
Grateful-ungrateful	3.03	3.34	3.07
Generous- selfish	3.15	3.61	3.5
Overall score	3.40	3.31	3.22

As shown in Table 5, the numbers represent the different scores that each speaker's accent received on a five-point scale for each trait. Overall, the speaker's accent on all the 12 traits had varied evaluations with no speakers' accent receiving a negative evaluation. These results clearly show that the official Standard English accent is rated more favorably than the other two accents and emerges first (Voice 1). The difference in perception of the other two speakers' accents for CamE (Voice 2) and CamFE (Voice 3) accents is not quite significant although CamE is rated higher.

3. Participants' Perceptions of Speakers of Came Accent

This section presents findings from the participants' attitudes when in contact with other speakers of the CamE accent in Thailand. They were to indicate whether they would admire, be indifferent to or laugh at an interlocutor who happens to speak with a CamE accent. Here, the affective and the behavioral components of language attitude were germane (Garrett et al., 2003; Lippi-Green, 2012; McKenzie, 2010). That is when in contact with CamE accent, the participants might naturally develop a prejudicial feeling of some sort to the accent in question (affective component) or aroused certain feelings/reactions of it as a result of such contact (the behavioral component). In this light, three patterns were deduced: (i) if participants like (affective) the accent, they would admire (behavioral) the speaker; (ii) if participants dislike the accent or find it funny (affective),

they would likely laugh (behavioral) at the speaker; and (iii) if participants neither like nor dislike (affective) the accent, they would be indifferent (behavioral) to the speaker (see Table 6).

Table 6
On Perceptions towards Users of CamE Accent

Reactions	Frequency	Percentage
Admiration	18	69.3
Humiliation	1	3.8
Indifference	7	26.9
Total	26	100

Table 6 shows that most of the participants (69.3%) admired speakers of CamE accent, meanwhile, 26.9% indicated an indifferent attitude towards such speakers. Only 1 participant (3.8%) showed dislike for speakers of this accent.

In a similar vein, the participants were asked to provide reasons for why they would have certain attitudinal tendencies (see Table 6) toward speakers of CamE accent. Interestingly, all 26 participants only responded with either admiration or indifference. None of the participants indicated making a mockery of the accent users. The participants' qualitative responses from the questionnaire are thematically presented in Table 7 with a description and some examples from their responses.

Table 7
Thematic Analysis Justifying Reactions towards CamE Speakers

Theme	Participants	Description	Examples from data
Admiration	12	The participants indicated that they admire and have a feeling of respect for Cameroonians who speak English in Thailand using their local Cameroonian accent. They further reported that the accent is not easy to remember after many years of exposure to and interactions with speakers of other accents. So, for someone to still maintain his/her CamE accent is actually worth commending.	<p>‘Because in Thailand, most Cameroonians want to speak with a foreign accent whereas they have their own local Cameroonian English accent. So I admire somebody who speaks English here with a CamE accent’.</p> <p>‘Because I want to speak like him or her to show that am proud of my own English accent’.</p> <p>‘Because it isn’t easy to still speak with CamE accent in a context like Thailand where some people still think native variety is the norm’.</p>

Table 7 (Continued)

Theme	Participants	Description	Examples from data
	9	The participants also indicated the aesthetic value of the CamE accent as a strong admiration force. They find the prosody of the accent captivating and enjoy listening to speakers of the accent, especially when they themselves cannot really speak English with the accent as a result of their long stay abroad.	'I just love listening to CamE accent; it is captivating and sounds sweet to the ears. I wish I could speak in the same accent as others'.
Indifference	5	With regards to this theme, the participants said that the CamE accent is common to hear in Thailand, especially when in any Cameroonian gathering. These Cameroonians would typically use their CamE accent when speaking English or speak CPE. In which case, the participants felt like it is commonly heard, more like the Thai English accent or any other accent in Thailand.	'I'm indifferent to CamE accent because I am familiar with the accent. My friends here in Thailand use it all the time when they speak English. I always feel more like am in Cameroon'.
			'It is usual to hear it all over Thailand in any and every place where there are Cameroonians. This makes it common and less special to me'.
			'For me, my indifference attitude is simply because I can also speak with the same accent. Listening to others use the accent here in Thailand is like listening to myself too because am also in the same context, using the same accent. I can't dare to speak with my friends using any so-called native or other peoples' accents. English is used in Cameroon too, so it's my way of showing my own linguistic identity'.

Discussion

This finding corroborates previous research results in ascertaining that English in Cameroon is far from being a monolith (Atechi 2008, 2015; Essomo, 2015; Ngwo, 2017). This situation is further exacerbated by the highly complex linguistic context in which English operates in Cameroon (Anchimbe, 2012). Talking about the plurality of English accents in Cameroon, Wolf (2013) observes that “there is an almost infinite set of English varieties in Cameroon” (p. 71). If such claims can be verified, then listeners, including the participants of this study, through the phenomenon of linguistic prejudice, are bound to adopt varying attitudes when using English or in contact with different English accents.

Studies have shown that evaluations of language may be based on aesthetic as well as linguistic features associated with that language (Giles & Rakić, 2014). This is because perceptions of a language might be influenced by the knowledge (be it objective or subjective, true or fallacious) that speakers have of different accents (Giles & Marlow, 2011). Thus, speakers' attitudes toward an accent tend to be conditioned either by what they believe about the structural beauty of such an accent or any stereotypical knowledge about users of the accent (see Table 3). These findings could be related to the 'native speakerism' notion where native English varieties are esteemed more highly than other non-native varieties of English (Ambele, 2020).

It can be seen from Table 5 that the speaker in voice 2 with the CamE accent is rated more favorably than the other two speakers on several traits, i.e. honesty, friendliness, humility, reliability, gratefulness, and generosity. Here the speaker scored 3.38, 3.42, 3.42, 3.23, 3.34, and 3.61 respectively. To a considerable extent, this can be verified in the society as speakers who successfully approximate native varieties of English are generally associated with the positive aspects of the mentioned traits in Table 5 (Ambele, 2020; Honey, 1989). Anglophone Cameroonians are reputed for their warmth, kindness, and trustworthiness (Nkengasong, 2016; Wolf, 2013). It is certainly such traits that gave Buea (headquarter of one of the English-speaking regions of Cameroon) its name 'town of legendary hospitality'. Generally, the listener-participants were able to associate with Speaker 2 some of the traits that are typically associated with Anglophone Cameroonians. The result in Table 6 implies that CamE, according to the participants, is rather autonomous and does not suffer from any negative attitude even in a diasporic context. Thus, the participants are proud of this national accent as it indicates their local Cameroonian identity (Anchimbe, 2014; Nkengasong, 2016).

Overall, the participants admire CamE accent speakers either because the accent sounds nicer to the ears or because they believe that the accent is not easy to learn and speaking it is actually an achievement. The main reason why some of them are indifferent to CamE is that the accent is common. It is used in all Cameroonian gatherings and some of them too can as well speak using the accent which inadvertently diminishes their admiration for the accent/speaker (see Table 7).

Conclusion

This study was conducted within the framework of language attitudes of ESL Cameroonian teachers of CamE accent in Thailand. In exploring the speakers' perceptions of CamE accent and use in a foreign context, the findings show that the speakers have a positive attitude towards CamE accents and its users in the diaspora even after years of living abroad. The participants found the prosodic features of the accent pleasant to the ears, as well as the simplicity of its structure that makes it easy to learn and use. When asked to evaluate speakers' personality traits such as honesty, friendliness, humility, reliability, gratefulness, and generosity from the matched-guise, the participants rated high Voice 2 (CamE) (Table 7). These findings corroborate general perceptions of Cameroonian users of this accent in that those with a CamE accent are generally considered kind, warm, and intelligent since it approximates the socially acceptable standard variety (Ambele, 2020; Essomo, 2015; Ngwo, 2017). This study has demonstrated that for speakers with a multilingual background, mutual intelligibility, aesthetics, and authenticity prevail over language purism. So speakers should not be stigmatized or feel linguistically unsecured because of their language identity since attitudinal judgments are more of a result of linguistic prejudices (Anchimbe, 2012; Atechi, 2015).

The fact that Voice 2 (see Table 7) did not receive any negative attitude from the listener-participants implicates that CamE is gaining more and more recognition beyond the Cameroonian border - no participants indicated that they would be stigmatized or mock as a user of CamE accent. In light of the global Englishes movement (Rose & Galloway, 2019), non-native English accents in general and CamE accents, in particular, should be treated as autonomous accents (Atechi, 2008; Ngefac, 2010; Ngefac & Bami, 2010). This is even more interesting because even the participants in the current study who have lived abroad for over two years still prefer to use English with their local Cameroonian English accent. In fact, in Aloua's (2016) study, up to 60% of the informants, all foreigners indicated that they would like to learn CamE in order to communicate with Cameroonians. This implicates that CamE is beginning to attract foreigners' admiration.

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