

# The English Speech of Francophone Primary School Teachers and *Cours Moyen Deux (CM2)* Pupils in Cameroon

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the English spoken productions of primary school teachers and their graduating pupils in Cameroon, with the aim of checking how much English is learnt by the time the primary child moves to the secondary education level. The data came from classroom observations, tape-recording of lessons as they were taught and a spoken performance test taken by the pupils. The work is couched within the structural approach to phonology, and the error analysis and the contrastive methods of analysis were used to describe the data. A number of interesting findings were obtained. First, francophone primary school teachers in Cameroon are not proficient in English and they cannot therefore teach the subject even though they were summoned to do it. Second, many francophone primary school pupils learn very little English and, as a result, secondary school teachers have no choice but to start the English subject from scratch. Characteristically, these pupils' spoken productions exhibit various features at the level of consonants like substitution, cluster simplification and realisation of silent letters. At the vocalic level, spelling pronunciation causes monophthongs to be replaced by foreign sounds, and diphthongs and triphthongs to be monophthongised. Most interestingly, vowel nasalization is systematic in specific contexts.

**Keywords:** Cameroon, Consonant, Francophone English, Learner English, Vowel

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## 1. Introduction

Since Reunification in 1961, Cameroon has been implementing an official policy of French-English bilingualism and, close to 60 years today, the vast majority of Francophone Cameroonians cannot still function in Basic English. In an attempt to boost the learning of English by Francophone and French by Anglophone Cameroonians, Government decided that the second official language of each citizen should be taught as early as the first day of primary school. The purpose of this study, which focuses on English in primary school, is to check how much English is learnt at the phonological level by the time a Cameroonian child leaves primary school. The following four questions are set to guide the research exercise: What are the characteristic phonological features of the English of primary school teachers? What are the characteristic phonological features of

the English of primary school leavers? From the features observed, can it be said that primary school leavers in Cameroon meet Government's expectations? Can it be said that Government is serious about its official French-English bilingualism policy? The work comprises three main sections entitled background to the study, methodology, and data analysis. These are considered in turn.

## 2. Background to the Study

For many years, successive governments in Cameroon have taken various measures to ensure the spread of official bilingualism in the country. The measures which are relevant to the present study have been taken as from the year 1996. These measures, which are couched in the form of orders, decrees, ordinances, service notes and circular letters, are listed below:

– an order stipulating that every primary school teacher would henceforth teach every subject on the school syllabus including the second official language subject was issued (Order No 21/E/59 of May 15, 1996 organising the Grade One teacher certificate examination);

– a primary school syllabus outlining how each subject including the second official language subject would be taught was designed by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC [1], Kouega [2])

– an order introducing the second official language subject in both the written and oral parts of the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) examinations and its French equivalent, the *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires* (CEP) examinations was issued (Order No 66/C/13 of February 16, 2001);

– a circular letter instructing primary and nursery education state officials to see that bilingualism is effective in all nursery and primary schools (circular letter No 033/B1/1464/MINEDUC/IE/ IGPBIL of October 14, 2002) was issued;

– a circular letter instructing teacher training college principals to provide adequate training so that student-teachers be sufficiently equipped to teach the second official language

(Circular letter No 009/B1/1464/MINEDUC/IGE/IGP/BIL of April 9, 2003) was issued.

It was envisaged that, after these decisions and measures are implemented fully, every Cameroonian citizen would be bilingual in French and English and every pupil who leaves primary education would have learned enough French and English to be capable of following courses taught in either official language at the secondary education level. With this target in mind, education officials set the general objectives of the teaching of English in Class Six as follows:

- to provide the learners with English that they will use at the end of their primary school education in their daily life requirements;

- to establish a basis for further work in English for those who will go into secondary education;

- to expose learners to other aspects of the English speaking culture

- to foster bilingualism and national integration.

To attain these objectives, Government officials decided that the communicative teaching method was to be applied and relevant structural features were to be taught, as Table 1 (MINEDUC [1], p. 32) shows:

**Table 1.** *The CM2 English syllabus.*

Communicative objectives	Structural focus
Talking about one's present actions	We are cleaning the room. We sweep the classroom everyday.
Talking about one's habitual actions	She comes to school on Friday They go home every weekend...
Describing what one is good at	She is good at mathematics/jumping...
Describing the activities of someone	He is a good fisherman. He catches fish with a net
Talking about one's future intentions	She is going to visit her aunt next week. I shall visit my uncle next year...
Comparing people and things	He is taller than I. Peter is more intelligent than John. An elephant is stronger than a cow. This bamboo is as long as that ruler...
Talking about hypothetical situations	If I have headache, I will take some tablets. If it rains tomorrow, I'll take my umbrella.
Expressing one's wishes	I would like to be a teacher, I wish I were a bird...
Talking about the past	I was in class four when I was eight years old...
Counting objects	Counting up to 1,000,000 (one million)
Describing a journey	The journey was interesting / boring / dangerous.
Predicting outcomes	Following this story/situation, I think...
Describing ways of travelling	He goes by land (on foot, by bicycle, on horseback...), by air (by plane, by balloon...), by sea (by canoe, by raft, by boat, by ship...)

The contents of the prescribed textbook (*Champions in English CM2*, published by EDICEF) that was to be used to attain these objectives is reproduced in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Contents of Champions in English CM2 (Class Six).*

Units in the book	Pages	Grammar points tackled
Unit 1	5-8	Can for ability and inability, Revision of Present continuous Negative forms
Unit 2	9-12	Simple present, Revision of Present continuous, be good at + ... ing Adjectives, Simple past: regular and irregular verbs
Unit 3	13-16	Why? Because..., Simple present for habitual action, Going to + infinitive, Imperatives
Revision pages: Grammar exercises 20, Vocabulary exercises 21		
Unit 4	23-26	Correct reactions, Revision of Simple past, Going to + infinitive
Unit 5	27-30	Going to + infinitive, Comparatives: as ... as/... er than Likes and dislikes
Unit 6	31-34	Description: There is/are; You can see... + preposition Adverbs of frequency: always, never sometime to have the right to
Revision pages: Grammar exercises 37, Vocabulary exercises 38		
Unit 7	41-44	Simple present Simple past: regular and irregular verbs
Unit 8	45-48	Modals of possibility and obligation
Unit 9	49-52	Simple present, Simple past, Imperatives, Giving reasons
Revision pages: Grammar exercises 54, Vocabulary exercises 55		
Unit 10	59-62	Giving reasons, Asking questions, Present continuous Adjectives
Unit 11	63-66	Asking questions, Simple past, enough + noun Simple present

Units in the book	Pages	Grammar points tackled
Unit 12	67-70	Giving reasons, Present continuous Simple past
Revision page: Grammar exercises 71, Vocabulary exercises 72		
Wordlist 73-78		

Various evaluations of these measures have been made. Some evaluations were made by Government officials themselves (e.g. MINEDUC [3]). Other evaluations were made by a number of researchers, among others: Constable [4], Tchoungui [5], Kouega [6, 2, 7, 8, 9], Biloa [10], Echu [11], Simo Bobda [12], Ombouda Onana [13], Sokeng Piewo [14], and Kouega and Sokeng Piewo [15]. Their findings revealed that the official bilingualism policy fails to produce bilingual Cameroonians. At all stages of language acquisition, this policy, which is still in practice in the country today, is a sheer waste of resources. At the primary level of education, pupils are expected to be provided with “English that they will use ... in their daily life requirements” (MINEDUC [1] p. 30). Unfortunately, most of the teachers have not been taught English let alone being taught how to teach English (Abang [16]). As a result, when primary school leavers move on to secondary education, they are re-taught the basics of English as they had learnt nothing worth building on. The purpose of the present study is to check how much English is learnt at the phonological level by the time a Cameroonian child leaves primary school.

### 3. Methodology

A total of 112 informants of both sexes (pupils, and CM2 teachers) took part in this study. These were: 60 *Cours Moyen 2* pupils henceforth CM2 pupils (i.e. primary Class 6 pupils) aged 9-12, 40 *Sixième* pupils (Form One) aged 10-14, and 12 CM2 teachers. The 60 CM2 pupils came from six schools selected at random in the following residential areas in the city of Yaounde: Bastos, Ekoudou, Messa, Sources, Tsinga, and Tsinga Olinga. In each of the selected schools, two CM2 classes were chosen i.e. 12 classes in all. The teachers of these 12 classes were also chosen and they turned out to be 7 female and 5 male. Then, in each of the six schools, ten pupils were randomly selected, with the focus on the pupils' gender i.e. 30 female and 30 male. The 40 Form One pupils, aged 10-14, came from Government secondary schools located in the following residential areas: Cité Verte,

Nkol-Bisson, Nkol-Eton, and Tsinga. In each of the schools visited, ten pupils i.e. five female and five male, were selected at random.

The data came from tape-recorded lectures and a reading test. In each school, one teacher's lecture was tape-recorded. As for the pupils, they were made to read some passages drawn from their textbook, which was “Champions in English” at that time. The passages chosen contained targeted words. For example, the passage entitled “A CELEBRATION!” (p. 28) was chosen because it contains words like “birth, women, children, etc.” In order to complete the data, additional words were selected from other passages of this same book and were read by the informants. From these two sets of spoken data, some 369 phonological errors were identified.

### 4. Analysis

The analysis is limited to segmental features. The symbols that are used to represent RP segments are those used in the 2016 edition of the CALD - Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2016), which combines the written transcriptions of words with their on-line oral renditions. Consonants are considered first and vowels next.

#### 4.1. Consonants

The segments /v/, /θ, ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /h/, /tʃ, dʒ/ and /r/ on the one hand and RP consonant clusters on the other are taken up in turn. Consonant segments are considered first. The segments /v/, /θ, ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /h/, /tʃ, dʒ/ and /r/ pose a very serious problem to pupils and their teachers. The labio-dental fricative /v/ which is a sound produced with the lower lip touching the upper teeth, is usually pronounced accurately when it is represented by the letter V as in “visit”. When represented by other letters like F in “of” and PH in “nephew”, it is pronounced as spelt, as shown in Table 3 where “FrancoE” stands for “Francophone English”.

Table 3. Renditions of the labio-dental fricative /v/.

Informants	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Words	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	/v/	/f/	oʃ, nephew	/bʌv/; /'nevju:/	/f/; /ne'fy/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	/v/	/f/	oʃ, nephew	/bʌv/; /'nevju/	/ɔʃ/; /ne'fy/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	/v/	/f/	oʃ, nephew	/bʌv/; /'nevju:/	/ɔʃ/; /ne'fy/; N=40 (100%)

Table 3 shows that all the teachers and their pupils mispronounced the words “of” and “nephew”, surely because the letters F and PH are systematically rendered as /f/ in French, as the words “foi” (faith) and “phare” (headlight of a car) illustrate.

Interdental sounds, which are represented by the letter sequence TH, are produced with the tip of the tongue inserted between the upper and lower teeth. The voiceless /θ/ is replaced by the alveolar /t/ as in Table 4 and its voiced counterpart is replaced by /d/ as shown in Table 5.

**Table 4.** Renditions of the voiceless interdental fricative /θ/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Class Six teachers	/θ/	/t/	<u>th</u> ink	/θɪŋk/	/tiŋ/	N=12 (100%)
			he <u>th</u> althy	/'hɛlθɪ/	/'ɛlti/	
			tee <u>th</u>	/ti:θ/	/tit/	
Class Six pupils	/θ/	/t/	<u>th</u> ink	/θɪŋk/	/tiŋ/	N=60 (100%)
			<u>th</u> ree	/θri:/	/tə'vi/	
			he <u>th</u> althy	/'hɛlθɪ/	/ɛlti/	
Form One pupils	/θ/	/t/	<u>th</u> ink	/θɪŋk/	/tiŋ/	N=40 (100%)
			<u>th</u> ree	/θri:/	/tə'vi/	
			he <u>th</u> althy	/'hɛlθɪ/	/ɛlti/	

**Table 5.** Renditions of the voiced interdental fricative /ð/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Class Six teachers	/ð/	/d/	<u>th</u> ere	/ðɛə/	/dɛɛ/	N=12 (100%)
			bro <u>th</u> er	/'brʌðə/	/'brʌdɛɛ/	
			with <u>th</u>	/wɪð/	/wid/	
Class Six pupils	/ð/	/d/	<u>th</u> e	/ðə/	/də/	N=60 (100%)
			fa <u>th</u> er	/'fɑ:ðə/	/'fadɛɛ/	
			with <u>th</u>	/wɪð/	/wid/	
Form One pupils	/ð/	/d/	<u>th</u> e	/ðə/	/də/	N=40 (100%)
			fa <u>th</u> er	/'fɑ:ðə/	/'fadɛɛ/	
			with <u>th</u>	/wɪð/	/wid/	

The replacement of interdentals with alveolar sounds is systematic in Cameroon as it is also observed in Cameroon English (Simo Bobda [17], Kouega [18]).

The alveolar fricative /z/ is a sound produced with the tip of the tongue touching the alveolar. This sound is usually pronounced accurately when it is represented by the letter Z as in “zoo”, but when it is represented by the letter S or SS as in “huszband, “pozsessive”, “dezsert”, it is devoiced as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Renditions of the alveolar fricative /z/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Class Six teachers	/z/	/s/	H <u>z</u> usband; po <u>z</u> sessive	/'hʌzɪbænd/; /pə'zɛsɪv/	/ysbã/; /pose'siv/; N=12 (100%)	
Class Six pupils	/z/	/s/	de <u>z</u> sert; po <u>z</u> sessive	/dɪ'zɜ:t/; /pə'zɛsɪv/	/de'sɛɛ/; /pose'siv/; N=60 (100%)	
Form One pupils	/z/	/s/	de <u>z</u> sert; po <u>z</u> sessive	/dɪ'zɜ:t/; /pə'zɛsɪv/	/de'sɛɛ/; /pose'siv/; N=40 (100%)	

This rendering is influenced by French, a language in which the digraph SS is pronounced /s/ as in *assemblée* (assembly) and the letter S is pronounced /z/ when it occurs between vowel letters as in *poser* (to put).

The palato-alveolar fricative /ʒ/ is a sound realised with the front of the tongue touching the front part of the hard palate. This sound can be represented by the letter sequences SU as in “uzually, plezure”, SI as in “vzion”, TI as in “equzation” etc. It is usually replaced by the alveolars /z/ and /s/ (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Renditions of the palato-alveolar fricative /ʒ/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Class Six teachers	/ʒ/	/z/	u <u>z</u> ually	/'ju:ʒəli/	/'yzuali/; N=12 (100%)	
Class Six pupils	/ʒ/	/z/; /s/	v <u>z</u> ion; equ <u>z</u> ation	/'vɪʒn/; /i'kweɪʒn/	/'vi'zjɔ̃/; /ekwa'sjɔ̃/; N=60 (100%)	
Form One pupils	/ʒ/	/z/; /s/	v <u>z</u> ion; equ <u>z</u> ation	/'vɪʒn/; /i'kweɪʒn/	/'vi'zjɔ̃/; /ekwa'sjɔ̃/; N=40 (100%)	

The glottal fricative /h/ is a sound produced when the vocal cords are pulled apart, the glottis allowing the air from the lungs to move out freely without any articulator modifying its course. This sound, which is represented by the letter H as in “hosphital” and “happh”, is systematically omitted by all the informants, as Table 8 shows.

**Table 8.** Renditions of the glottal fricative /h/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Class Six teachers	/h/	//	h <u>h</u> ello; hom <u>h</u> ework	/hələʊ/; /'həʊmwɛk/	/elo/; /omwɔk/; N=12 (100%)	
Class Six pupils	/h/	//	h <u>h</u> ello; hosp <u>h</u> ital	/hə'ləʊ/; /'hɒsprɪtl/	/'elo/; /ospɪ'tal/; N=60 (100%)	
Form One pupils	/h/	//	h <u>h</u> ello; hosp <u>h</u> ital	/hə'ləʊ/; /'hɒsprɪtl/	/'elo/; /ospɪ'tal/; N=40 (100%)	

The palatal affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are sounds produced with the front of the tongue placed in the middle of the hard palate. These sounds usually pose a serious problem to the informants. The voiceless /tʃ/ is generally represented by the letter sequence CH as in “chhoose” and the voiced /dʒ/ by the letters J as in “enhjoy” and G as in “lharge”. They are systematically replaced by the palato-alveolar segments /ʃ/ and /ʒ/, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Renditions of the palatal affricates /tʃ/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	/tʃ/	/ʃ/	<u>ch</u> oose; tou <u>ch</u>	/tʃu:z/; /tʃʌtʃ/	/ʃoz/; /tʃʃ/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	/tʃ/	/ʃ/	<u>ch</u> eck; tou <u>ch</u>	/tʃɛk/; /tʃʌtʃ/	/ʃɛk/; /tʃʃ/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	/tʃ/	/ʃ/	<u>ch</u> eck; tou <u>ch</u>	/tʃɛk/; /tʃʌtʃ/	/ʃɛk/; /tʃʃ/; N=40 (100%)

This is obviously due to the fact that CH is rendered as /ʃ/ in French, as in the word *échanger* (to change). Similarly, the letters G and J (Table 10) are rendered /ʒ/ as in *large* (large) and *juste* (just).

Table 10. Renditions of the palatal affricates /dʒ/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	/dʒ/	/ʒ/	en <u>joy</u>	/ɪn'dʒɔɪ/	/ʒɛʒɔɪ/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	/dʒ/	/ʒ/	ju <u>st</u> ; lar <u>ge</u>	/dʒʌst/; /lɑ:dʒ/	/ʒyst/; /lɑ:ʒ/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	/dʒ/	/ʒ/	ju <u>st</u> ; lar <u>ge</u>	/dʒʌst/; /lɑ:dʒ/	/ʒyst/; /lɑ:ʒ/; N=40 (100%)

Lastly, the segment /r/ which is realised with the tip of the tongue producing a series of vibrating taps against the alveolar ridge, is represented by the letter R as in “red”. This sound is replaced in all contexts by the French uvular fricative /ʁ/, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Renditions of the alveolar roll /r/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	/r/	/ʁ/	re <u>d</u> ; arri <u>v</u> e	/rɛd/; /ə'rɑ:v/	/ʁɛd/; /a'ʁiv/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	/r/	/ʁ/	re <u>d</u> ; arri <u>v</u> e	/rɛd/; /ə'rɑ:v/	/ʁɛd/; /a'ʁiv/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	/r/	/ʁ/	re <u>d</u> ; arri <u>v</u> e	/rɛd/; /ə'rɑ:v/	/ʁɛd/; /a'ʁiv/; N=40 (100%)

Some innovative renderings are observed. The French palatal nasal sound /ɲ/ represented by the graphemes GN as in *pagne* (loincloth) is heard in all contexts where these graphemes occur, as in the word “recognize” (Table 12).

Table 12. Some innovative renderings: the foreign consonant /ɲ/.

Teachers and pupils	Grapheme	RP	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	GN	/gn/	/ɲ/	re <u>co</u> gnise	/ˈrɛkəgnɑɪz/	/ʁɛkɔ'ɲiz/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	GN	/gn/	/ɲ/	re <u>co</u> gnise	/ˈrɛkəgnɑɪz/	/ʁɛkɔ'ɲiz/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	GN	/gn/	/ɲ/	re <u>co</u> gnise	/ˈrɛkəgnɑɪz/	/ʁɛkɔ'ɲiz/; N=40 (100%)

Similarly, the silent letter K which is usually followed by N as in the words “knife”, “know” is always articulated (Table 13). As the cluster /kn/ does not exist in French, this CC cluster is rendered as CVC by these learners. In other words, the sequence of letters KN is first transformed into /k/+n/ and then realised as /k/+ən/ as shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Some innovative renderings: /n/ rendered as /kən/.

Teachers and pupils	Grapheme	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	K+N	/n/	/kən/	<u>kn</u> ife <u>kn</u> ow	/naɪf/; /nəʊ/	/kə'naɪf/; /kə'no/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	K+N	/n/	/kən/	<u>kn</u> ife <u>kn</u> ow	/naɪf/; /nəʊ/	/kə'naɪf/; /kə'no/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	K+N	/n/	/kən/	<u>kn</u> ife <u>kn</u> ow	/naɪf/; /nəʊ/	/kə'naɪf/; /kə'no/; N=40 (100%)

RP consonant clusters are simplified by vowel epenthesis. Clusters ending in /l/ and preceded by a consonant letter, i.e., C+/l/ clusters like /bl/ as in “table”, /dl/ as in “candle”, /gl/ as in “single”, /kl/ as “uncle”, /pl/ as in “people”, /tl/ as in “cattle” are all rendered as C+/l/+ə/ or CCV; hence the cluster /bl/ as in “table”, “dribble”, “able” becomes /blə/, as shown in Table 14.

Table 14. Rendering of C+/l/ clusters like /bl/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	/bl/	/blə/	ta <u>bl</u> e; dri <u>bl</u> e	/ˈteɪbl/; /ˈdrɪbl/	/ˈteblə/; /ˈdʁɪblə/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	/bl/	/blə/	ta <u>bl</u> e; dri <u>bl</u> e	/ˈteɪbl/; /ˈdrɪbl/	/ˈteblə/; /ˈdʁɪblə/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	/bl/	/blə/	ta <u>bl</u> e; dri <u>bl</u> e	/ˈteɪbl/; /ˈdrɪbl/	/ˈteblə/; /ˈdʁɪblə/; N=40 (100%)

With the cluster /sm/ as in “bilingualism”, “tribalism”, the vowel /ɛ/ is inserted in-between the consonants, yielding a CVC structure, as in Table 15.

Table 15. Renderings of clusters ending in /m/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	/zm/	/zɛm/	bi <u>ng</u> ualism	/baɪˈlɪŋgwəlɪzəm/	/bilɛgwaˈlizɛm/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	/zm/	/zɛm/	tri <u>b</u> alism	/ˈtraɪbəlɪzəm/	/ˈtʁɪbaˈlizɛm/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	/zm/	/zɛm/	tri <u>b</u> alism	/ˈtraɪbəlɪzəm/	/ˈtʁɪbaˈlizɛm/; N=40 (100%)

In clusters whose orthography contains a vowel letter like A in “total”, E in “clapped”, “open”, “even”, “cooked”, and U in “wonderful”, this vowel letter is articulated fully, as Table 16 shows.

*Table 16. Renderings of clusters ending /t/.*

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Class Six teachers	/pt/	/pet/	clapped	/klæpt/	/klapet/; N=12 (100%)
Class Six pupils	/kt/	/ket/	cooked	/kɔkt/	/kɔkɛt/; N=60 (100%)
Form One pupils	/kt/	/ket/	cooked	/kɔkt/	/kɔkɛt/; N=40 (100%)

Silent letters are generally articulated, like B in the word “comb”, GH in the word “daughter”, L in the word “chalk”, and N in the word “condemn”. The grapheme GH in the word “daughter” is rendered with the velar /g/; this may derive from the pronunciation of French loans like “Ghana” and “ghetto”. Table 17 brings together the three categories of

informants i.e. Class Six teachers (N=12), Class Six pupils (N=60) and Form One pupils (N=40) under the single label Teachers and pupils (N=112). This is due to the observation that their renderings of words do not seem to differ in any way. When these three categories are brought together, the size of subsequent tables will be reduced considerably.

*Table 17. Articulation of silent letters.*

	Graphemes	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Teachers and pupils	B, L, M, GH	//	/b/, /l/, /m/, /g/	comb daughter chalk condemn	/kəʊm/ /dɔ:tə/ /tʃɔ:k/ /kəndɛm/	/kɔmb/ /dɔgtɛs/ /ʃɔlk/ /kɔdɛmn/ N=112 (100%)

In summary, the consonant system of the English of the informants of this study includes the sounds outlined in Table 18.

*Table 18. The consonant system of the English of francophone learners.*

Consonants	Examples	Transcriptions
/p/	pan	pan
/b/	tube	tyb
/t/	caʃ	kat
/d/	do	du
/k/	book	buk
/g/	bag	bag
/f/	for	fɔʁ
/v/	very	vɛʁi
/s/	dessert	desɛʁ
/z/	zoo	zɔɔ
/ʃ/	which	wiʃ
/ʒ/	genius	ʒɛniʊs
/l/	lot	lɔt
/m/	moon	mɔɔn
/n/	man	man
/p/	recognise	vɛkɔpiz
/ʁ/	rather	vadɛʁ
/j/	yellow	jelo
/w/	well	wɛl

## 4.2. Vowels

*Table 19. Renderings of the high front unrounded vowel /i:/.*

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering
Teachers and pupils	/i:/	/eɔ/ /ɛ/ /iɛ/	people receive believe	/pi:pl/ /ri'si:v/ /bi'li:v/	/pe'ɔplɛ/ /vɛ'sevɛ/ /be'liɛvɛ/ N=112 (100%)

RP monophthongs, diphthongs, triphthongs, and lastly V+N (vowel + nasal sound) sequences are considered in turn. Monophthongs are considered first. The high front unrounded vowel /i:/ tends to be replaced by a variety of foreign monophthongs and diphthongs which seem to reflect the spelling of the words in which they occur, as Table 19 shows.

The same can be said of the high front unrounded vowel /ɪ/, which is rendered by all the informants as /a/ in a word like “image”, /o, ɛ/ in the two occurrences of this sound in the word “women”, /y/ as in “busy” and /ɥi/ as in “biscuit”. These renderings are presented in Table 20.

*Table 20. Renderings of the high front unrounded vowel /ɪ/.*

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/ɪ/	/a/	image	/'ɪmɪdʒ/	/'ɪ'maʒ/	N=112 (100%)
		/o, ɛ/	women	/'wɪmɪn/	/'wɔ'mɛn/	
		/y/	b <sup>u</sup> sy	/'bɪzɪ/	/'byzi/	
		/ɥi/	biscuit	/'bɪskɪt/	/'bis'kɥit/	

The mid-low vowel /ɛ/ does occur in the English of these informants, especially in words like “ten” and “pen” where the vowel is represented by the letter E. When this vowel is represented by a sequence of vowel letters as in “leopard”, spelling pronunciation is applied, as shown in Table 21.

*Table 21. Renderings of the vowel /ɛ/.*

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/ɛ/	/ɛʊ/	leopard	/'lɛpəd/	/'lɛʊ'pɑʒ/	N=112 (100%)
		/ea/	mea <sup>s</sup> ure	/'mɛ:ʒə/	/'mea'zyʒ/	

The low front vowel /æ/ is systematically replaced by /a/ when it is represented by the letter A. Otherwise, it is pronounced as spelt, as the word “plait” as rendered in Table 22.

*Table 22. Renderings of the vowel /æ/.*

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/æ/	/a/	apple	/'æpl/	/'aplə/	N=112 (100%)
		/ɛ/	plait	/'plæt/	/'plɛt/	

The low back vowel /ɑ:/ is rendered as /a/ in all contexts except when the letter R occurs in the vicinity, as the words “after”, “sergeant” and “car” in Table 23 show.

*Table 23. Renderings of the /ɑ:/.*

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/ɑ:/	/a/	after	/'ɑ:ftə/	/'aftɛʒ/	N=112 (100%)
		/ɛʒ/	sergeant	/'sɑ:dʒənt/	/'sɛʒ'ʒã/	
		/aʒ/	car	/'kɑ:/	/'kaʒ/	

The vowel /ɒ/ is rendered as /a/ or /o/ depending on whether it is represented by a word containing the letter A like “what” or O like “hot” (Table 24).

*Table 24. Renderings of the vowel /ɒ/.*

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/ɒ/	/a/	wh <u>a</u> t	/'wɒt/	/'wat/	N=112 (100%)
		/o/	bec <u>o</u> use	/'bɪ'kɒz/	/'bi'koz/	
		/o/	h <u>o</u> t	/'hɒt/	/'ot/	

Similarly, the vowel /ɔ:/ is rendered as /a/ when represented by the letter A as in the words “tall” and “awful”, as Table 25 shows.

*Table 25. Renderings of the vowel /ɔ:/.*

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/ɔ:/	/a/	tall	/'tɔ:l/	/'tal/	N=112 (100%)
		/awə/	awful	/'ɔ:fl/	/'awəfyl/	

The back vowel /ʊ/ is rendered /ɔɔ/ in “look”, /ul/ in “should” and /y/ in “sugar”. As can be seen, the rendering varies depending on the spelling of the word in which it occurs, as Table 26 shows.

*Table 26. Renderings of the vowel /ʊ/.*

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/ʊ/	/ɔɔ/	look	/'lʊk/	/'lɔɔk/	N=112 (100%)
		/ul/	sh <u>o</u> uld	/'ʃʊd/	/'ʃul/	
		/y/	sug <u>a</u> r	/'ʃʊgə/	/'sygəʒ/	

The vowel /u:/ is hardly realized by these informants. It is systematically replaced by foreign sounds like /ɥi/ in “fruit”, /ɔɔ/ in “pool” and /y/ in “blue”, as shown in Table 27.

Table 27. Renderings of the vowel /u:./

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
	/u:/	/ɥi/	fruit	/fru:t/	/fɥi/	N=112 (100%)
		/ɔɔ/	pool	/pu:l/	/pɔɔ/	
		/y/	blue	/blu:/	/bly/	

The back vowel /ʌ/ is pronounced /ɔ/ when represented by the letter O as in “come” and /y/ when represented by the letter U as in “luck” (Table 28).

Table 28. Renderings of the vowel /ʌ/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
	/ʌ/	/ɔ/	come	/kʌm/	/kɔm/	N=112 (100%)
		/y/	luck	/lʌk/	/lyk/	

The mid-high central vowel /ɜ:/ which is usually represented by a sequence of vowel followed by the letter R (V+R sequence) as in the words “prefer”, “learn”, is systematically replaced with the sequence V+/ɥ/, as the illustrations in Table 29 show.

Table 29. Renderings of the vowel /ɜ:/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
	/ɜ:/	/ɛɥ/	prefer	/pɪ'fɛ:/	/pɛ'fɛɥ/	N=112 (100%)
		/eaɥ/	learn	/lɜ:n/	/leaɥn/	
		/yɥ/	burn	/bɜ:n/	/byɥn/	
		/iɥ/	dirty	/dɜ:t/	/diɥt/	

The mid-low central vowel /ə/ is heard only when it functions as an epenthetic vowel. In other contexts, it is replaced by a variety of sounds suggested by the spelling of words, as Table 30 shows.

Table 30. Renderings of the vowel /ə/.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
	/ə/	/a/	about	/ə'baʊt/	/a'but/	N=112 (100%)
		/was/	tortoise	/'tɔ:tɔ:s/	/'tɔɪtwas/	
		/ɔɥ/	doctor	/'dɔktə/	/'dɔktɔɥ/	
		/uɥ/	vapour	/'veɪpə/	/'vapuɥ/	
		/ɛɥ/	father	/'fa:ðə/	/'fadɛɥ/	

Diphthongs are considered next. All closing diphthongs are pronounced as the spellings of the words in which they occur suggest, as Tables 31 show. For example, /eɪ/ is pronounced /a/ in “hate” and /ɛ/ in “wait”. /aɪ/ becomes /aji/ in “hi”, /i/ in “cry” and /ɥi/ in “buy”. /ɔɪ/ is systematically pronounced /ɔɥi/ as in “boy” or /wa/ as in “voice”. /əʊ/ may be monophthongised to /o/ as in “go” or /u/ as in “soul”; it may also be diphthongised as /oa/ as in “coat”. Lastly, /aʊ/ may be rendered in three ways: /ɔ/ as in “down”, /awu/ as in “out” and /u/ as in “plough”. These closing diphthongs are brought together in Table 31.

Table 31. Renditions of closing diphthongs.

Teachers and pupils	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/eɪ/	/a/	hate	/heɪt/	/atə/	N=112 (100%)
		/ɛ/	wait	/weɪt/	/wet/	
Teachers and pupils	/aɪ/	/aji/	hi	/haɪ/	/aji/	N=112 (100%)
		/i/	cry	/kraɪ/	/kɥi/	
Teachers and pupils	/ɔɪ/	/ɥi/	buy	/baɪ/	/bɥi/	N=112 (100%)
		/ɔɥi/	boy	/bɔɪ/	/bɔɥi/	
Teachers and pupils	/əʊ/	/wa/	voice	/vɔɪs/	/vwas/	N=112 (100%)
		/o/	go	/gəʊ/	/go/	
Teachers and pupils	/əʊ/	/u/	soul	/səʊl/	/sul/	N=112 (100%)
		/oa/	coat	/kəʊt/	/koat/	
Teachers and pupils	/aʊ/	/ɔ/	down	/daʊn/	/dɔn/	N=112 (100%)
		/awu/	out	/aʊt/	/awut/	
		/u/	plough	/pləʊ/	/plug/	

The same can be said of centring diphthongs, which are hardly realised as expected, as Table 32 indicates. To be specific, /ɪə/ is pronounced /ea/ as in “idea” and /jɔɥ/ as in “junior”. /ʊə/ becomes /ɔɔɥ/ as in “poor” and /u/ as in “tourist”. Lastly, /eə/ is rendered as /ɛɥ/ in “there” and “affair” and as /aɥ/ in “rare”.

Table 32. Renditions of centring diphthongs.

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/ɪə/	/ea/ /jɔʊ/	idea junior	/a'i'diə/ /'dʒuːniə/	/i'dea/ /ʒy'ɲjɔʊ/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ʊə/	/ɔɔʊ/ /u/	poor tourist	/pʊə/ /'tuəriːst/	/pɔɔʊ/ /tu'ɪst/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/eə/	/ɛʊ/ /aʊ/	there affair rare	/ðeə/ /ə'feɪə/ /rɛə/	/dɛʊ/ /a'fɛʊ/ /ʁaʊ/	N=12 (100%)

Regarding triphthongs, when the central element of a triphthong is the vowel /ɪ/, this central element tends to be replaced by the glide /j/, as Table 33 shows. /eɪə/ is pronounced /ajɛʊ/ in “player”; /aɪə/ is rendered in at least three ways: /iʁɛ/ as in “tired”, /ij/ as in “lion”, and /iʁ/ as in “iron”. Lastly, /ɔɪə/ is pronounced /ajɛʊ/ as in “employer”.

Table 33. Renditions of triphthongs containing /ɪ/.

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/eɪə/	/ajɛʊ/ /iʁɛ/	player tired	/pleɪə/ /taɪəd/	/'plejɛʊ/ /tiʁɛd/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/aɪə/	/ij/ /iʁ/	lion iron	/laɪən/ /aɪən/	/lijɔ̃/ /iʁɔ̃/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ɔɪə/	/ajɛʊ/	employer	/ɪm'plɔɪə/	/äplwa'jɛʊ/	N=112 (100%)

When on the contrary this central element is the vowel /ʊ/, the glide /w/ is often used, as Table 34 shows. /əʊə/ is systematically pronounced /owɛʊ/ as in “slower” and /aʊə/ becomes /awuʊ/ or /uʁ/ as in “our”.

Table 34. Renditions of triphthongs containing the glide /ʊ/.

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/əʊə/	/owɛʊ/	slower	/sləʊə/	/sə'lowɛʊ/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/aʊə/	/awuʊ/ occasionally /uʁ/	our	/aʊə/	/awuʊ/ occasionally /uʁ/	N=112 (100%)

Vowel + nasal sound sequences (V+N) are considered next. One interesting characteristic feature of the speech of these informants is its systematic use of nasal vowels. All instances of V+N, which surface as: /ɪm/ as in “simple”, /ɪn/ as in “interest”, /ɛm/ as in “member”, /ɛn/ as in “enter”, /æm/ as in “ambition”, /æɪn/ as in “ran”, /ɑ:m/ as in “example”, /ɑ:n/ as in “answer”, /ɒm/ as in “composition”, /ɒn/ as in “continent”, /ʌm/ as in “compass”, and /ʌn/ as in “Monday” are replaced by the nearest French nasal sounds, as Table 35 shows.

Table 35. Renderings of the sequence “V+N”.

	RP segment	FrancoE equivalent	Examples	RP rendering	FrancoE rendering	
Teachers and pupils	/ɪm/	/ɛ/	impossible simple	/ɪm'pɒsɪbl/ /'sɪmpl/	/ɛ̃pɒ'siblə/ /'sɛ̃plə/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ɪn/	/ɛ/	interesting	/'ɪntrestɪŋ/	/ɛ̃te'ɪɛstɪŋ/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ɛm/	/ã/	member	/'mɛmbə/	/mãbɛʁ/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ɛn/	/ã/	enter	/'ɛntə/	/'ãtɛʁ/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/æm/	/ã/	ambition	/æm'bɪʃn/	/ãbi'sjɔ̃/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/æɪn/	/ã/	ran	/ræn/	/ʁã/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ɑ:m/	/ã/	example	/ɪg'zɑ:mpl/	/ɛk'zãplə/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ɑ:n/	/ã/	answer dance	/'ɑ:nsə/ /dɑ:ns/	/'ãswɛʁ/ /dãs/	N=112 (100%)
Class Six teachers	/ɒm/	/ɔ̃/	composition	/kɒmpə'zɪʃn/	/kɔ̃pɔzi'sjɔ̃/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ɒn/	/ɔ̃/	continent	/'kɒntɪnənt/	/kɔ̃tɪnã/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ʌm/	/ɔ̃/	compass	/'kɑmpəs/	/'kɔ̃pəs/	N=112 (100%)
Teachers and pupils	/ʌn/	/ɔ̃/	Monday month	/'mʌndeɪ/ /'mʌnθ/	/'mɔ̃de/ /'mɔ̃t/	N=112 (100%)

The vowel system of the English of these informants may be said to include 17 segments: nine monophthongs, five

diphthongs and three nasal vowels. These are outlined in Table 36.

**Table 36.** The vowel system of the informants' English.

Sounds	Examples	Transcriptions
Monophthongs		
/i/	idea	idea
/e/	late	let
/a/	image	imaʒ
/ɛ/	pl <u>a</u> it	plet
/y/	busy	byzi
/o/	bec <u>a</u> use	bikoz
/ɔ/	com <u>e</u>	kɔm
/u/	sou <u>l</u>	sul
/ə/	tab <u>l</u> e	tablə
Diphthongs		
/eɔ/	pe <u>o</u> ple	peɔplə
/ie/	bel <u>i</u> ev	believ
/ea/	id <u>e</u> a	idea
/ɔɔ/	loo <u>o</u> k	lɔɔk
/oa/	co <u>o</u> t	koat
Nasal vowels		
/ɛ̃/	sim <u>pl</u> e	sɛ̃plə
/ã/	ra <u>n</u>	ɾã
/ɔ̃/	unc <u>l</u> e	ɔ̃klə

## 5. Conclusion

This study set out to check how much English is learnt at the phonological level by the time a Cameroonian child leaves primary school, English having been hurriedly made a compulsory subject in all primary schools in the country. The informants were primary school leaving pupils and their teachers, and the materials collected were tape-recordings of classroom lectures and the reading of a few samples of texts from the pupils' textbook. A number of questions were set to guide the study. The first two questions focused on the characteristic phonological features of the English of primary school teachers and of primary school leavers. It was found that the features of the English of these two sets of informants were similar and that these features differed from RP in every respect. Some distinctive RP consonants are elided like /h/ which is never pronounced, and the whole of the vowel system of their speech is different from RP. Consequently, their speech is unintelligible to any speaker of English.

The next question asked whether from the phonological features observed one could say that primary school leavers in Cameroon meet Government's expectations. These expectations were that the learners should be provided with the English that they will use at the end of their primary school education in their daily life requirements and when they go into secondary education. It is evident that these expectations are far from being attained. The last question enquired whether Government was serious about its official French-English bilingualism policy. In all likelihood, Government does not seem to be serious about its own policy as it uses unmotivated teachers who are not proficient in English to teach the subject. As was suggested in previous research (Kouega [2, 7] for example), there is a need to provide a certification for bilingual competence and the certificate issued has to be made to have market value in the country.

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