

## THE UNIQUENESS OF GHANAIAN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION IN WEST AFRICA\*

Augustin Simo Bobda  
*University of Yaounde I, Cameroon*  
simob@serveur.cm.refer.org

This paper shows drastic differences between the pronunciation of English in Ghana and in all the other West African countries with a similar colonial experience and similar sociological and sociolinguistic backgrounds. The distinctiveness of Ghanaian English involves the restructuring of (RP) /ɪ/, /ɜ:/, post-tonic /ə/ with orthographic <er, re, or, our, ur, ous, us, um>, /ə/ before a final /n/, the pronunciation of *-able* and *-ative* words, certain words with <a>, the Alternating Stress Rule, and some miscellaneous items. It is shown, for example, that /a/ and /ɛ/ substitute for a wide range of (RP) segments, and that noticeable changes in the direction of these two vowels have occurred within the last two decades. Finally, the paper shows that Ghana, while diverging from the pronunciation of her more immediate neighbours and colonial companions, shows striking similarities in some restructuring patterns, not only with northern Nigeria, but also with geographically more distant east and southern Africa.

### 0. Introduction

Descriptive studies on African English in general and on African English pronunciation in particular, as Gorkach (1996:314) pertinently notes, are extremely rare. But even scarcer are contrastive and comparative studies that bring out the distinctiveness of regional and national varieties. The insufficiency of knowledge on geographical varieties has led to overgeneralisation (see examples in Simo Bobda 1995 and 2000) or to the belief that some features extending far beyond country or regional boundaries are geographically bound. In West Africa, Ghana provides a typical example of a national English accent which, despite a colonial past and sociolinguistic background generally shared with, or similar to that of other countries in the region, has developed in a clearly distinct manner and offers more than a little surprise to the investigator. One such surprise is the fact that there have been noticeable and systematic large-scale changes within only one generation, a phenomenon not paralleled elsewhere in the region. The present paper seeks to highlight such peculiarities. It begins by surveying the early history of English in Ghana and presenting Ghanaians' judgments of their English, which probably explains, at least in part, its distinctive nature.

### 1. Early history of English in Ghana and Ghanaians' present attitudes toward, and self-evaluation of, their English

Nelson & Todd (1992:440) rightly present Ghana as probably the West African country that has had the most intimate and longest contacts with English-speaking expatriates over the years. In the early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were already on the Ghanaian coast (Ghana was then known as *Gold Coast*) a sizable number of mulattos, offspring of British merchants with Ghanaian women.

Ghanaians also started travelling to England very early. Adjaye (1987:35), quoting previous sources, reports that as far back as 1554, Ghanaians were being sent overseas. She further reports references, in the highest sphere of the British Crown, to West Africans, Ghanaians in particular, in the following years. For example, quoting Todd (1974:53), Adjaye says that in 1596 Queen Elizabeth was complaining that 'there are here too manie' West Africans, most of them presumably Ghanaians. Those who were sent to study in Britain were generally the children and relatives of local kings, chiefs, and influential people, who were expected, in return, to promote British trade and political interests (Adjaye 1987:36).

Notorious among these first young Ghanaians to be educated in Britain was one Philip Quaco who obtained a Master of Arts from Oxford and became 'the first of any non-European to receive ordination in the Anglican Communion' (Adjaye 1987:37, quoting previous sources). He married an English woman and had forgotten all his Fante when he returned to Cape Coast in 1765.

In Ghana itself, schools were also opened very early. The first were Castle schools, initially meant to provide a Christian education, but gradually extended to general education, to teach Ghanaians to read and write, so that they could help the British administration. The first pupils were mulattoes, but the schools eventually extended admission to the whole population.

Probably as a result of this early exposure to, and intimacy with English, Ghanaians are known, in West Africa, to have developed a particularly positive attitude toward English. At the time when the return to the indigenous languages has virtually become the song of the day in other parts of the continent, Dseagu (1996) reports a sizable minority of middle-class Ghanaians who still give priority to English in their homes, and make their children acquire it as their first language.

The attachment of Ghanaians to English, predictably, affects their attitude toward Pidgin English. According to Huber (1998:182), 'for some Ghanaians, Pidgin is simply a taboo'. This attitude may account for the paucity of scholarly work on this language; to some of its detractors, describing it would mean giving it official sanction. Pidgin English, the indiscriminate use of which is 'leading the nation towards illiteracy' (Egblewogbe 1992), is banned in some schools, and tends to be avoided by the older generation and the elite (e.g., university lecturers), who associate it only with people of low social status (Huber 1998:182-5). The popular prejudice against Pidgin has led to the belief that it was brought to Ghana by other West African countries, namely Nigeria (Huber 1998:186). All this

prejudice explains the fact that in Ghana, unlike in Nigeria and Anglophone Cameroon, Pidgin English is not a dominant language of inter-group communication.

Ghanaians are also reported to be very proud of their English (see Sey 1973:10, Nelson & Todd 1992:440). Gyasi (1991: 26), principal in English at the Kumasi branch of the Ghana Institute of Languages, confirms that 'Ghanaians generally boast that their pronunciation is nearer that of RP [sic] than that of other non-native users of English in the former British colonies in Africa, especially in West Africa'. They are also very sensitive to stigmatised forms and will promptly correct themselves if their attention is drawn to a mistake:

The linguist may be able to isolate features of Ghanaian English and describe them. But once they are made known to him, the educated Ghanaian would strive to avoid them altogether. The surest way to kill Ghanaian English [...] is to discover it and make it known. (Sey 1973:10)

This background probably explains why Ghana, despite a shared colonial experience with, and a similar sociolinguistic background to, countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, and Gambia, has a clearly distinct accent in English in West Africa.

## 2. The distinctiveness of Ghanaian English pronunciation

Apart from well known statements on English pronunciation in West Africa found, for example, in Spencer 1973, Todd 1982, Gorlach 1991, Schmied 1991, Mufwene 1992, and Hansen et al 1996, there are specific studies on Ghanaian English pronunciation, like Adjaye 1987, or the pronunciation sections of Sey (1973, Appendix A, pp. 143-53) or Gyasi 1991. But none of these works highlights the distinctive nature of this particular accent. Instances of this distinctiveness can be found in the patterns of restructuring of /ʌ/, /ɜ:/, post-tonic /ə/ involving the orthographic forms <er, or, our, ur, ure, ous, us, um>, /ə/ before final /n/, /ɜ/ in unstressed <-able> and <-ative>, other pronunciations involving <a>, the behaviour with respect to the Alternating Stress Rule, and finally, the pronunciation of some particular words. This paper investigates these features, basing itself on the existing literature, but more importantly on field work among Ghanaians and speakers from various parts of Africa, field work that has included recordings from, and visits to, the countries involved. References to other countries in the region for comparison ignore Liberia, where a clearly distinct variety marked by the influence of American English is spoken, with a more complex vowel system (see Wells 1982:634). It can therefore be considered a case apart.

### 2.1 Patterns of restructuring of /ʌ/

One of the most noticeable markers of West African English is the rendering of RP /ʌ/ as /ɔ/, yielding the following pronunciations: /kɔt, sɔn, dɔn, sɔm, kɔzɪn, blɔd, flɔd/, for *cut, sun, done, some, cousin, touch, blood, flood*. This feature contrasts with east and southern African /a/ for these words. In today's Ghanaian English pronunciation, /ɔ/ may occur only if conditioned by the following four

factors, as discussed below: orthography, some assimilation process, the ethnic group of the speaker, and age.

The data gathered for this study shows sporadic occurrences of /ɔ/ in *love*, *cover*, *ton*, *honey* which apparently is due to the influence of spelling. This suspicion is reinforced by the observation that the same speakers who say /səm/ *sum* may say /sɔm/ *some*, that those who say /dæn/ *dun* /*Dunn* may say /dɔn/ *done*, etc.

Evidence for the effect of assimilation in the restructuring of /ɪ/ is found in the pronunciation of the following pairs of words by some informants:

- (a) /sapa/ *supper*, but /sɔpos/ *suppose*  
/rɪdækʃn/ *reduction*, but /kɔndɔkt/ *conduct*

Consider also

- (b) /stragəl/ *struggle* vs. /trɔbəl/ *trouble*, /dɔbəl/ *double*

These facts suggest clearly in the second members of the (a) pairs the assimilation of the potential /a/ to the rounded vowel of the second syllable. More speculatively, the second members of (b) can be said to exhibit another assimilatory process, whereby the potential /a/ assimilates to the feature [+round] of the following consonant. It is too early, though, to be very assertive with such analyses of an accent which is only beginning to be seriously scrutinized.

Concerning the parameter of ethnicity, /ɔ/ as a substitute for /ɪ/ has previously been associated with the coastal Gas (see, for example, Gyasi 1991:27). But Gyasi's seems to be a very conservative analysis, which does not reflect the facts of Ghanaian English pronunciation today. Adjaye (1987:121), who found that the younger generation favours /a/, is definitely closer to the data for this study, where the prevalence of /a/ approximates 100 % across all ethnic groups. This divergence from a study completed in 1987 is not surprising, considering that the Ghanaian English accent has evolved considerably within a generation, as will be seen further below.

Age is a crucial factor in the distribution of /a/ and /ɔ/. As indicated above, Adjaye's study shows that the occurrence of /ɔ/ is mostly associated with the older generation. In fact, the /a/ phenomenon seems to be rather recent in Ghanaian English. Sey's 1973 very credible and popular book, arguably a classic on Ghanaian English, does not make a single mention of /a/ as a substitute for /ɪ/ in the long appendix on 'Some Features of E.G.E.[Educated Ghanaian English] Pronunciation'. The only substitutes he discusses are /ɔ/ and /ɜ/. This is convincing enough evidence that, only a generation or so ago, Ghana had /ɔ/ for *cut*, *just*, *mother*, *done*, etc. like the rest of West Africa.

In West Africa, Ghana shares /a/ for the vowel /ɪ/ in *cut* with the Hausa accent of northern Nigeria. But there, there seems to be a gradual change to the dominant southern accent, as nowadays more and more northerners do say /kɔt, mɔdɔ/, etc. /a/ is also found, presumably as a residue of some colonial input, in a handful of Sierra Leone Krio words, like *wan* and its derivatives, *kam*, *nat*, *natin*, *san*, *angri*, *yanda* 'one, come, nut, nothing, sun, hungry, yonder' (see, for exam-

ple, Fyle & Jones 1980). Some varieties of West African Pidgin English likewise have /a/ in even fewer words (in a subset of the Krio list): *wan* and *kam* are the most common of these.

That Ghana should distinguish itself in West Africa with this pattern of restructuring of /a/ is surprising, as it does not have the characteristics generally associated with the occurrence of this feature. Awonusi 1986 attributes northern Nigerian /a/ to the fact that the Europeans who managed to enter the Moslem north at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, until then impenetrable to white settlers, were from the south of England, and brought an unrounded realization of the vowel of *cut*. (Those who had settled earlier in the south were Irish and Scottish missionaries, known to have a round vowel in this context.) Harris 1996, who highlights the sharp contrast between West African /ɔ/, and East and Southern African /a/, explains that the latter form is due to the fact that the British settled in the latter regions only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the vowel of *cut* and similar words in standard British pronunciation was already unrounded. Harris' analysis is supported by a detailed account of the changes undergone by the 'short u', as he calls it, throughout the ages.

Given that Ghanaians had the same colonial experience as southern Nigerians, Cameroonians, Sierra Leoneans, and Gambians with respect to the colonial input for /ɔ/, there is no justification for their /a/ other than their sensitivity to stigmatised forms and their ever readiness to change to the fashionable form.

An even more unique pattern of restructuring of RP /a/ is /e/. Previously associated with the Cape Coast area (Sey 1973:147) and particularly with the Fantes (Gyasi 1991: 27), /e/ is now found to cut across all ethnic groups in Ghana, from the south to the north, and from the west to the east. This is further evidence of noticeable changes occurring in Ghanaian English pronunciation within a remarkably short time. The occurrence of /e/ does not seem to be either orthographically or phonologically conditioned. Rather, it would be safe to talk of lexical or idiolectal conditioning.

The pronunciation of Pidgin English in Ghana has maintained, in the main, the /ɔ/ forms of the past. There are, however, in acrolectal speech, a gradual accommodation of changes affecting standard English, as Huber (1998:226) notes, for example, the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural objective personal pronoun (*us* in English) to vary along the speech continuum (basilect — mesolect — acrolect) as follows: *wi* → *os* → *es* → *as*

## 2.2 Pattern of restructuring of /ɜ:/

In West Africa, RP /ɜ:/ is generally rendered as /ɔ, ɛ, a/, substitutes determined by the orthography as well as the country of the speaker. Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Gambia generally have /ɔ/ for the graphemes <or, ur, our>. /ɔ/ also occurs in these countries for <ir> in the following words and their derivatives: *first, bird, dirt, third*. /ɔ/ further occurs for <er> in the unique case of *person*, more commonly in basilectal/mesolectal speech, induced historically by Krio /pɔsin/. <er, ear, ir, yr> generally yield /a/. In the case of Nigeria, this analysis is mostly based on the Yoruba accent (usually considered the dominant accent for some historical and

geographical reasons (see Simo Bobda 1995). The Hausa accent in the north shows a high prevalence of /a/ for all the graphemes (see Jibril 1982), although there is a perceptible adjustment of this northern accent to that of the south. Igbo English, for its part, has a high frequency of occurrence of /ɛ/ for <er, ear, ir, yr>.

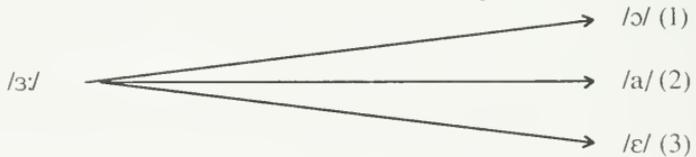
Cameroon has two main patterns of restructuring: The graphemes <or, ur, our> generally yield /ɔ/, while <er, ear, ir, yr> yield /ɛ/. /a/ occurs as a substitute for /ɔ/ only in the basilectal/mesolectal pronunciation of *her, sir*, and more commonly in *Germany, maternity*, and (verb) *transfer*: /dʒamani, mataniti, transfa/. The /a/ in the latter three words can arguably be attributed to an assimilation to the /a/ of the neighbouring syllables, since Cameroonians do not say [prifa, itaniti] *prefer, eternity*, etc., but [prife, iteniti].

Ghanaians are unique in West Africa in substituting /ɛ/ for /ɜ:/ across the board, where the other speakers would have the range of substitutes seen above. As with the other pronunciations analysed above, the systematic occurrence of /ɛ/ for RP /ɜ:/ is fairly recent. It must have supplanted an earlier /ɔ/ for the graphemes <or, ur, our>, as attested by data collected from Ghanaian speakers of the old generation.

If we limit ourselves to what can be considered the current mainstream Ghanaian English pronunciation, we can see its distinct behaviour with regard to the restructuring of /ɜ:/ more clearly in Fig. 1.

**Figure 1:** Patterns of restructuring of /ɜ:/ in West Africa

a: Nigerian (Yoruba), Sierra Leonean, Gambian English

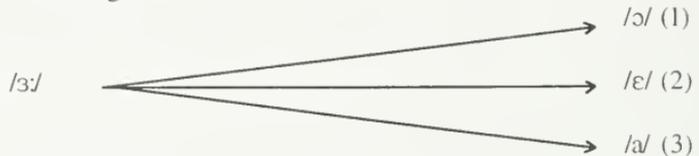


(1) <or, ur, our> + <ir, er> in *first, bird, dirt, person*

(2) <er, ear, ir, yr>

(3) <er, ear, ir, yr> occasionally

b: Cameroon English



(1) <or, ur, our>

(2) <er, ear, ir, yr>

(3) <er, ir> in *her, transfer, maternity, Germany, sir*

c: Ghanaian English



### 2.3 Restructuring of post-tonic /ə/ involving <er, or, our, ur, ure, us, ous, um>

In West Africa, as well as in the rest of Africa, post-tonic /ə/ is generally restructured as /a/ when it is represented by <er, re>, but patterns vary with <or, our, ur, ure, us, ous, um>. West Africa generally has /ɔ/. This common trend contrasts with the main Ghanaian pattern, which is /a/. Ghana shares this feature with northern Nigeria, where Jibril (1982:76) reports the following pronunciations: /administreta, vasas, leba/ *adminsitrator, versus, labour*. It is also a feature of East and southern African English.

As with /a/ above, the conservative West African /ɔ/ in Ghana in the above context is associated with a number of parameters including the ethnic group, age, and phonological assimilation. Thus, Adjaye (1987:171) associates it with the Eves and the Gas, around 50% of whom display this feature in the study. This is another instance in which Ghanaian English pronunciation seems to have undergone a noticeable change over the past few years, since the data for this study, only 13 years after Adjaye's findings, show that even among the Eves and the Gas, /a/ is far less appealing. Predictably, /ɔ/ is also associated with the old generation. Finally, Adjaye's example of /mɔtɔ/ *moto*, instead of the potential /mɔtə/, Sconceivably shows the effect of assimilation, with the last vowel taking on the rounded feature of the first.

Why /a/ occurs for <or, our, ur, ure, us, ous, um> is something of a puzzle. For <us> and <um>, there is the obvious influence of free forms like *us, husband, custard* and *Mum, drum, sum* in which RP /ʌ/ is already rendered as /a/ in Ghanaian English, but the occurrence of /a/ with the other graphemes is hard to account for.

To explain the phenomenon, Sey (1973:148) invokes, in fact indicts, teaching. He thinks that 'the persistence of this deviant pronunciation is probably due, in the first place, to the fact that /ə/ is scarcely ever taught at school as a distinct vowel with clearly stateable distribution; that is, in weakly stressed syllables'. This explanation is not very convincing. The difficulty in rendering /ə/ is a well-known problem in EFL and ESL classrooms all over the world. Adhering to Sey's thesis would mean accepting the inability of English teachers everywhere to teach this aspect of English. (In fact, /ə/ is taught at all levels, and even sometimes over-taught, one would say.) Sey's second explanation, equally speculative, is that /ə/ and /a/ are sufficiently alike to Ghanaian English speakers to be treated as variants.

Adjaye's (1987:169) own explanation is phonological and relates to the predictability of /a/. She says that RP /ə/ is rendered as /a/ in open syllables. This explanation works as far as the following examples go: *actor, administator, agriculture, failure, major, visitor, saviour, odour*, etc. She contrasts these examples with another list of hers, *accident, action, agricultural, comfort, cupboard, comparison*, etc. in which RP /ə/ occurs in final closed syllables and is NOT rendered as /a/. The explanation is not totally satisfactory, as it does not account for

the occurrence of /a/ not only in *visitors*, but also in *status*, *callous*, *generous*, *maximum*, etc, in which RP /ə/ is not syllable-final.

The above analysis shows that it is difficult to provide a neat pedagogical or phonological account for this /a/ in Ghanaian English and in the other varieties in which the feature is attested. Even the influence of the orthography, which accounts for many features in non-native English pronunciation, is of little use here since /a/ reflects neither <or>, nor <our>, nor <us>, etc. Failure to reduce vowels is also very often invoked to account for the facts of African English. But there again, one is stuck because the surface [a] does not reflect the (unreduced) underlying form(s) of the vowels involved. For example, on the basis of *lab[v]rious*, one can safely postulate that the underlying representation of [ə] in *labour* is /ɒ/, just as *pomp[v]sity* suggests that /ɒ/ is the underlying representation of [ə] in *pompous*. Ghanaian [a] does not reflect this underlying form (for a contrasting behaviour in Cameroon English, a reflection of the other West African Englishes, see Simo Bobda 1994 and Simo Bobda & Chumbow 1999).

A search for the source of /a/ in the early history of English in Ghana might also be considered. It is interesting to note in this connection that Sierra Leone Krio, often the repository of colonial residues, has patterns of restructuring like /ɔna, ɡɔvna, pala, sizas/ *honour, governor, parlour, scissors*, etc. A look across the Atlantic shows similar features in American creoles; for example, Bickerton 1977, quoted in Romaine (1988:140), has *spanza* for *sponsor* in Hawaiian Creole. Montgomery 1999 also has forms like *honnah* 'honour' imported into Sierra Leonean by the 18<sup>th</sup> century settlers, thus confirming the source of data like /dɔkta, pala, sizas, tela, pala/ *doctor, parlour, scissors, tailor, parlour* in Fyle & Jones 1980 and Jones 1984. But the interesting thing will still be that Ghana alone among the countries in the region exposed to the same type of colonial English has retained this feature. (It is not even found in the English of educated Sierra Leoneans, although it is found in Sierra Leone Krio, as shown above.)

Less frequent than /a/ as a substitute for /ə/ in the environments described, but not at all uncommon, is /e/. Indeed, in West Africa, pronunciations like *villa[dʒɛ]*, *visit[ɛ]*, *coura[dʒɛ]*s 'villager, visitor, courageous' though not altogether exclusive, would be more readily associated with Ghanaians.

#### 2.4 Restructuring of post-tonic /ə/ before final /n/

In West Africa, there are various patterns of restructuring of post-tonic /ə/ before a final /n/, patterns which may be conditioned regionally, idiolectally, orthographically, and/or lexically. When represented by <a>, it is generally pronounced /a/ as in *Afric[a]n, Ghanai[a]n, urb[a]n, cosmopolit[a]n*. Ghanaians often differ here by producing /e/, yielding *Afric[ɛ]n, Ghanai[ɛ]n*, etc.

There is generally a very high prevalence of [-in] with other endings in West Africa. This can be ascribed to the influence of the early Krio teachers, who were disseminated throughout the whole region from Gambia to Cameroon in the colonial era, and who have left indelible marks on the English of the region<sup>1</sup>. In the Krio language, *cotton, pardon, poison, Samson, even, eastern*, etc., are pronounced /kɔtin, padin, pizin, samsin, evin, istin/, etc (see, for example, Fyle & Jones

1980). Apart from words like *fashion* (Krio [fəʃɪn], most words in *-ion* (e.g., *mission*, *position*, *population*) generally constitute exceptions to the */-in/* ending, and have */-ɔn/*. West African national varieties show different kinds of divergence from the Krio pattern. For example, Cameroonians would produce */-in/* mostly when the preceding nucleus is a high front vowel, through the application of the *i*-Assimilation Rule (Simo Bobda 1994:209-10) which yields /kɪntɪn, hɪltɪn, hɪdɪn, ɪvɪn, ɪtɪn. ɪstɪn/ *Clinton, Hilton, hidden, even, eaten, eastern*, etc. Ghanaians show a very high predilection for */-in/*, even in endings where Krio and Sierra Leonean English speakers do not have */-in/*. They have */-in/* for the same words as the other West Africans, but also in *-ion* words like *reli[dʒɪn]*, *defini[ʃɪn]*, *consump[ʃɪn]*, where */-in/* fluctuates with the regional */-ɔn/*. As one might predict, this feature of Ghanaian English pronunciation, like many others, is also found in Ghanaian Pidgin English (see Huber 1998) where the many English loans in *-tion* may be pronounced */-in/* for */-ɔn/* elsewhere.

## 2.5 Restructuring of /ə/ in *-able* and *-ative* words

In unstressed position, *-able* and *-ative* are generally pronounced */-ɛbl/* and */-etɪv/*, respectively, in West Africa. Seen through the Trilateral Process (see Simo Bobda & Chumbow 1999), the [ɛ] is the unreduced, restructured form of the underlying native English /ə/, which reduces to [ə], while the West African /ə/ surfaces unchanged as [ɛ]. Departing from the mainstream pattern, Ghanaian English shows the spelling-induced /ə/ in *const[a]ble* (Sey 1973:145), *palat[a]ble*, *avail[a]ble*, *rel[a]tive*, *sed[a]tive*, etc

It should be noted that the occurrence of /ə/ is conditioned by the non-stressing of the corresponding vowel, since *able* as a free form, *en'able*, 'dative', etc., have /ə/ as in the other West African Englishes. It should further be noted that the conditioning is based only on the Ghanaian stress system, not the native English system. Thus, *communic[ə]tive*, *quantit[ə]tive*, *ten[ə]tive*, have /ə/ because, in Ghanaian English, these words are stressed as *communi'cative*, *quan-ti'tative*, *ten'tative*.

Finally, note that, once again, Ghana shares the feature described with East Africa and Southern Africa.

## 2.6 Other pronunciations involving <a>

Miscellaneous peculiarities involving <a> in Ghanaian English pronunciation include the occurrence of the spelling-induced /ə/ in several contexts in which the other West African Englishes have /ə/, /ɔ/, or other vowels. Thus, /ə/ generally occurs for pre-tonic RP initial /ə/ represented by <a>, as in [a]bout (also in Sey's 1973:27 and Gyasi's 1991:27 data), [a]gain, [a]lone, etc., for [e]bout, [e]gain, [e]llone elsewhere. ([a] is in free variation with [ɛ] in *about* in accents like Cameroon English, where [a] occurs as in Ghanaian English (Gyasi 1991:27) in *abroad* and *abandon*. Ghanaian English further has /ə/ for the article *a*, where the other West African Englishes have /ə/ resulting from the restructuring of /eɪ/, the strong form of this article. Finally, /ə/ occurs in Ghanaian English in *bury* [bəri], presumably by analogy with a word like *curry*, which has /ə/ following the reading rules of this variety of English.

## 2.7 Behaviour with respect to the Alternating Stress Rule

It may be appropriate to recall how the Alternating Stress Rule (ASR), defined by Chomsky and Halle (1968:78), applies in most varieties of native English. It affects words of three or more syllables ending with a strong cluster (having a tense vowel or a diphthong as the final syllable nucleus, or ending with a consonant cluster). The main stress of these words, underlyingly on the last syllable by virtue of the strong cluster, moves to the antepenultimate position, by the ASR. The stress of the last syllable then weakens from primary to secondary. Verbs are particularly prone to the ASR. The underlying stress and the surface stress of some example verbs in *-ate*, *-ise*, *-fy* appear as follows:

UNDERLYING STRESS	SURFACE STRESS
,indi'cate	'indi,cate
ap,preci'ate	ap'preci,ate
,orga'nise	'orga,nise
,recog'nise	'recog,nise
,ampli'fy	'ampli,fy
i,denti'fy	i'denti,fy

Some dictionaries do not mark the secondary stress in the surface form of the above verbs. And yet, it is necessary to distinguish them from nominal forms as in (verb) 'advo,c[ei]te vs (noun) 'advoc[ə, ɪ, eɪ]te, 'exer,cise vs 'exercise, or from adjectival forms as in (verb) separ[ei]te vs. (adj.) separ[ə, ɪ]te, etc.

The ASR generally does not apply in West African English, since Cameroonians, Nigerians, Sierra Leoneans, and Gambians say *indi'cate*, *stimu'late*, *real'ise*, *satis'fy*, etc. Educated Ghanaians, in contrast, do shift the primary stress to the antepenultimate syllable, but do not maintain a secondary stress on the last syllable. This results in the verbs *separate*, *legitimate*, *duplicate*, *advocate*, *exercise*, etc., having the same rhythm as the corresponding adjectives or nouns. In Ghanaian English, hypercorrection involving this aspect of pronunciation consists in speakers' shifting the stress even further back, to the pre-antepenultimate position in words of more than three syllables, a shift that yields (verb) 'appreciate, 'negotiate, 'articulate, 'identify, still without a secondary stress on the last syllable.

## 2.8 Miscellaneous peculiarities

Miscellaneous peculiarities in Ghanaian English include the prevalence, in the speech of many educated Ghanaians, of instances of hypercorrection like *fi[ŋ]er*, *stro[ŋ]er*, *lo[ŋ]er*; here, the speakers are visibly trying to demarcate themselves from the spelling pronunciation in *sin[g]er*, *han[g]er*, etc., observed elsewhere.

Ghanaian English also exhibits a few tonal peculiarities. One of the most noticeable is the characteristic falling tone on numerals and ordinals in *-teen*, as in [tētɪn(t), fōtɪn(t), fiftɪn(t), sévəntɪn(t)] *thirteen(th)*, *fourteen(th)*, *fifteen(th)*, *seventeen(th)*, etc., which strikes the visitor to the Accra market when the traders state their prices.

**Table 1:** Some differences between Ghanaian English pronunciation and other West African accents

WORD	RP	GAMBE,SLE, NIGYE	NIGHE	CAME	GHANE
money	mʌni	mɔni	mani	mɔni	mani, mɛ-
just	dʒʌst	dʒɔst	dʒast	dʒɔst	dʒast, dʒɛst
learn	lɜ:n	lan	lan	len	len
first	fɜ:st	fɔst	fest	fest	fest
third	θɜ:d	tɔd	tɛd	tɛd	tɛd
thirty	θɜ:ti	tati	teti	teti	teti
person	pɜ:sən	pɔsən, pɛ-	pəsən	pəsən	pəsin
constable	kɔnstəbl	kɔnstɛbul	kɔnstɛbəl	kɔnstɛbəl	kɔnstəbul, -əl
relative	rɛlətɪv	rɛlɛtɪv	rɛlɛtɪv	rɛlɛtɪv	rɛlɛtɪv
villager	vɪlɪdʒə	vɛlɛdʒə	vɛlɛdʒə	vɛlɛdʒə	vɛlɛdʒə,-e
visitor	vɪzɪtə	vɛsɪtɔ	vɛsɪtə	vɛsɪtɔ	vɛsɪtə
neighbour	nɛɪbə	nɛbɔ	nɛbə	nɛbɔ	nɛbə, -e
murmur	mɜ:mə	mɔmɔ	mama	mɔmɔ	mɛmə
nature	nɛɪtʃə	nɛtʃɔ	nɛtʃə	nɛtʃɔ	nɛtʃə,-e
callous	kæləs	kalɔs	kalas	kalɔs	kalas
census	sɛnsəs	sɛnsɔs	sɛnsas	sɛnsɔs	sɛnsas
spectrum	spektrəm	spektrɔm	spektrəm	spektrɔm	spektrəm
African	æfrɪkən	afɪkən	afɪkən	afɪkən	afɪkən
hidden	hɪd(ə)n	hɪdɪn	hɪdɪn	hɪdɪn	hɪdɪn
happen	hæp(ə)n	həpən	həpən	həpən	həpɪn
open	əʊp(ə)n	ɔpən,-ɔn,-un	ɔpən,-ɔn,-un	ɔpən,-ɔn,-un	ɔpɪn
Samson	sæms(ə)n	səmsɔn, -ɪn	səmsɔn, -ɪn	səmsɔn,-ɪn	səmsɪn
nation	nɛɪʃ(ə)n	nɛʃɔn	nɛʃɔn	nɛʃɔn	nɛʃɪn
a (boy)	ə [weak]	e	e	e	a
alone	ələʊn	ɛlɔn	ɛlɔn	ɛlɔn	əlɔn
bury	bɛrɪ	bɛrɪ	bɛrɪ	bɛrɪ	bərɪ
finger	fɪŋgə	fɪŋgə	fɪŋgə	fɪŋgə	fɪŋgə, -ŋə
recognise	'rɛkənɪz	'rɛkənɪz	'rɛkənɪz	'rɛkənɪz	[also]'rɛkənɪz
indicate	'ɪndɪk	'ɪndɪk	'ɪndɪk	'ɪndɪk	[also]'ɪndɪk
appreciate	'æprɪʃ	'æprɪʃ	'æprɪʃ	'æprɪʃ	[also]'æprɪʃ
specify	'spɛsɪf	'spɛsɪf	'spɛsɪf	'spɛsɪf	[also]'spɛsɪf
fourteen	<sup>3</sup>				fɔtɪn
fifteen					fɪftɪn
eighteen					ɛtɪn

### 3. Summary, conclusions, and comments

Table 1 summarises the major divergences between the phonology of Ghanaian English and that of Gambian English (GambE), Sierra Leone (SLE), Nigerian (Yoruba) English (NigYE), Nigerian Hausa English (NigHE)<sup>2</sup>, and Cameroon English (CamE), based on some example words selected from the data analysed:

The foregoing analyses reveal the main fact that the pronunciation of English in Ghana differs very noticeably, indeed, from that of the other countries in the region with a similar colonial experience and sociological and sociolinguistic backgrounds. It also reveals that several sound changes have taken place recently, or are in progress, in the direction of the features that make up the distinctiveness of Ghanaian English.

The data show that Ghanaians have a special predilection for /a/, which substitutes for a wide range of RP segments. This leads Gyasi (1991:27) to rightly say that 'much work is done by the vowel /a/ in Ghanaian English'. Another vowel that 'does much work' is /ɛ/. It is certainly difficult to explain this high frequency of the two vowels in that variety of English, and the on-going shift to the same direction, which can rightly be termed the '/a/ and /ɛ/ phenomenon in Ghanaian English'. One still undocumented explanation may be that a deviation in the direction of a particular sound tends to trigger other changes in the same direction.

One other puzzle in this study is the resemblance in many segmental features of the English pronunciation of Ghana with that of countries and regions with no apparent historical or geographical link, that is, northern Nigeria, East Africa, and Southern Africa.

Comparative and contrastive studies of African Englishes hold a great deal in store for the investigator.

### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Holm (1989:411) rightly notes in this connection 'the Sierra Leoneans were particularly influential in shaping West African English as it developed in the nineteenth century'.

<sup>2</sup> The three-tier division of Nigerian English into Yoruba English, Hausa English and Igbo English, borrowed from previous writers like Jibril 1982 and Awonusi 1986 is but a broad approximation. In fact, there are far more subdivisions. There is also a lot of overlapping, especially in the direction of the southern accents in general, and to a large extent in the direction of the Yoruba accent. The Igbo accent is not included in the table because, with respect to the features examined here, it overlaps with the neighbouring Cameroonian accent to the east.

<sup>3</sup> A blank under a variety represents the absence of systematic tonal features.

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