

The Indigenisation of English Vowels in the Zambian Media

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Abstract – English as the only national official language of Zambia is one language that is extensively used in the country. The widespread use of English has resulted into an interaction with the Bantu languages spoken in the country. This interaction, therefore, seem to have led to an English spoken differently from Received Pronunciation (RP). The aim of the paper is to establish the vocalic features of the English spoken in Zambia as used in the media. This study employed the theory of world Englishes and Contact Linguistics. Drawing on these theories, this paper argues that the English spoken in Zambian media is in contact with the Bantu languages spoken in the country and might have ‘created’ an English with vocalic features different from RP. Data were collected from 30 recordings of private and national TV and Radio newscasts, interview and phone-in programmes from ZNBC TV1, ZNBC Radio 4, Muvi TV, 5 FM, Q FM and Hot FM through observation. The findings reveal that the English spoken in Zambia, as used in the media, has a five vowel system similar to that of the Bantu languages spoken in the country, that is, [a, e, i, o, u]. The rendition of the twelve RP vowels to five is attributed to the fact that there is a tendency by ZE speakers to transfer rules of Bantu languages pronunciation to English through the phonological processes of monophthongization, substitution and glide epenthesis.

Keywords: Indigenization, vocalic, Received Pronunciation (RP), World Englishes

1. INTRODUCTION

Zambia is a linguistically complex and dynamic country, with a range of different languages playing different roles in different contexts. Zambia is a multilingual country endowed with about 73 ethnic groups who speak about twenty to twenty four languages. This clustering has resulted from different leveling processes such as intermarriages, loss of original group identities, geographical nearness, political domination and mutual trade. The 73 ethnic groups mainly consist of Bantu speaking people living in the country believed to have come from different parts of Central, Southern and East Africa as immigrants in the 19th century (Kashoki, 1978).

Among the 73 is the English language which emanates from the declaration by the government of the Republic of Zambia to adopt English as a language of instruction and official use at independence as there was a need to promote unity. This was so because English was considered a neutral language that did not belong to any linguistic or ethnic group in Zambia. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, p.7) postulate that “at independence, African countries needed to select a language or languages that could serve the needs of national unification.

Later on seven local languages were adopted to be used as regional *lingua francas*. These being Bemba, Tonga, Nyanja, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale and Kaonde. According to Marten and Kula (2007), the seven Zambian regional languages are used alongside English in a number of contexts. These seven regional official Zambian languages are used for literacy campaigns, radio broadcasting, and dissemination of official government information, political statements and in courts of law in their respective regions. The seven regional official languages are also used in news broadcasts on television (TV) as well as other light entertainment programs. This has led to an interaction between the Zambian local languages and English in many different contexts. This interaction seems to have influenced some changes in the way English is spoken in the country.

Another sector where English is extensively used is education. Owing to government decisions since independence, English is extensively used in schools as the only medium of instruction from grade five to the highest level of education, though English as a medium of instruction is a current policy adopted in 2013. Otherwise English had been the medium from grade one to tertiary level. According to UNICEF (2016), the current language policy takes a much firmer stand on the use of Zambian languages in education. A strong statement is further made that the January 2013 National Guide for language of instruction practice, published by the *Zambian Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education* mandates that Zambian languages replace English as medium of instruction in Grades one to four, in all primary schools in the nation. The Ministry declared that “familiar languages will be used for teaching initial literacy and content subjects in the early education (preschool) and lower primary school (Grades one to four) (MoESVTEE,2013:3). The term “familiar language” as used in the policy is not referring to the seven regional languages, but rather to the other local language of the community. This dramatic policy change is based on the advocacy of Zambian linguists such as Sampa (2005), Muyebaa (2009), Tambulakani and Bus (2012) among others, who argued that the use of English as medium of instruction was not serving the nation well. This however has not helped in that the use of English at lower levels of education is still seen. Despite the medium of instruction being local languages at primary level (Grade one to four), the text books used for learning are still in English as most of them have not been translated into the local languages. Then arguably, we can say that English is used even at primary schools as pupils read in English despite having explanations in the local languages. This has thus promoted the use of English and the Zambian local languages side by side. This promotion has brought about a very close interaction which may have resulted into deviations in the English spoken by indigenous Zambian. The use of English in schools, especially primary level, just shows how a Zambian learner is introduced to the interaction between the English language and the Bantu languages of Zambia. As school years go by, one becomes acquainted with English and one’s native language or language of classroom instruction (probably one of the regional official languages). This has led to the birth of code switching, mixing, blending and so forth because rules of English and the Bantu languages are learnt at a young age by the Zambian speaker. All these are because of language contact that goes on between English and Zambian Bantu languages.

As earlier stated, the use of English is diverse, hence this paper wishes to limit itself to the use of English in Media. Television stations such as the Zambian National Broadcasting

Corporation (ZNBC), Muvi TV, Prime TV, QTV and many other TV stations, programs presentation are virtually conducted in English with a few presented in a Zambian language of choice. This is seen more especially on Muvi TV programmes such as *Ready for marriage, beads and lipstick*, interview programmes, phone-in programmes and many others. Since TV and Radio try to capture the needs of people's lifestyles, interviewees are seen to be expressing themselves in a language they are comfortable with. On most radio stations, English is used extensively alongside local languages covering a range of topics from political and economic issues to general issues through interviews and 'phone-in' programmes where callers comment live on various issues of general interest. The Cable network such as DSTV on Zambezi Magic channel 160 depict the use of English alongside other languages in almost all the programmes. For instance, Shows such as *Zuba, Mpali, Date my Family Zambia, Mwine Mushi* use English as well as Nyanja, Tonga, Bemba so predominately.

The aforementioned social contexts hence have contributed greatly to the birth of bilingualism and to some extent multilingualism. It is evident among the educated Zambians for one to speak English and any other local languages of their choice. Thus, it can be said that there has been some influence of one language on another and in this case, English has been influenced in such a way that there are variations between the one spoken in Zambia and Received Pronunciation (RP). This is because the widespread use of English in Zambia and interaction with the Bantu languages in the country seems to have led to an English that is different from the yardstick. The differences can be seen at all the linguistic levels; grammar, semantics, discourse and more markedly at the phonological level. This study therefore sought to consider these differences at the phonological level by investigating the segmental feature of the English used in the media.

Deviations and variations in pronunciation of English has been noted in many other varieties of English in the world but there seems to have been no study with empirical evidence in Zambia that has been conducted to show any such deviations/variations which may lead to an English used in Zambia to be a variety in its own right. The bulk of the studies on Zambian English have used as their data base examples from students' written exercises (see Simukoko 1977, 1981; Hayes 1982, 1984; Lawrence & Sarvan 1983; Serpell 1978; Chisanga 1987). This study goes beyond written exercises but records actual pronunciations of the English spoken by indigenous Zambians in the media.

The study employed the theory of world Englishes by Braj Kachru (1992) and contact linguistics (Weinreich, 1968). The present paper is conceived on the understanding that a situation of language contact exists between English and the local languages of Zambia. Therefore, it is assumed that this language contact may have influenced the norms of RP and thus created some linguistic changes that have manifested into a phonologically 'new' variety of English used in the media in Zambia. Kachru (1982) speaks of this process as 'indigenization', which is, changing the language to suit the communicative needs of non-native users in new, un-English settings such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Singapore and many other countries. This argument is based on the fact that the indigenization or nativisation of a language is the process through which it is accommodated and adapted to its speakers and their circumstances.

As Olajide and Olaniyi (2013) postulate that pronunciation issues have been the bane of Standard Englishes all over the world. While most non-native speakers of English have been able to cross the hurdle of learning the syntax and semantics of Standard English, a recurrent issue in academic discussions has been their inability to approximate the native-like accentual competence. Thus, non-native English speakers articulate the language segmentally and suprasegmentally different from the native speakers. Kashoki (1978) looked into the use of English in the Education system and argued that since there were no native speakers of English to teach English, the education system should therefore not impose RP on its learner as there are no RP speakers to teach the language. The teacher of English today speaks and teaches a form of English that is an 'Africanised/Zambianised' English and his learners learn it and use it as well. They grow up with it. The media disseminates information in the same version of English. The fact that there is a widespread use of an English peculiar to the Zambian culture cannot be overlooked. This study thus sought to look into these peculiarities of the English spoken in Zambia at the phonological level.

It is hoped that this article will contribute significantly to the growing literature on the description and documentation of the linguistic features of the varieties of English that are spoken in African countries. It is also hoped that it will add to the body of knowledge on World Englishes. This article also argues that the scope is just on the English used by the educated Zambians in the media and not any other contexts. The study is mainly concerned with the pronunciations of vowels.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

English being a global language, spoken by different ethnic groups and found in different linguistic environments has no doubt developed varieties that probably reflect local nuances but nonetheless mutually intelligible. These varieties have come to be known as World Englishes. The varieties have come up due to interaction with other languages. This research therefore is governed by a combination of two theories, these being the theory of World Englishes popularized by Braj Kachru and Contact Linguistics by Uriel Weinreich (1968). According to Kachru (1992), the spread of English has been put in a model of World Englishes. This is one of the most influential models in explaining linguistic phenomena related to the spread of English across the world. In this model the diffusion of English is captured in terms of three concentric circles of the language. The three concentric circles represent the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts (Jenkins, 2009). The circles are categorized into Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle.

According to Kachru (1992), the Inner Circle refers to English as it originally took shape and was spread across the world in the first diaspora. The Inner circle thus represents the traditional, historical and sociolinguistic bases of English in regions where it is now used as a primary language. English is the native language or mother tongue of most people in these countries. Countries in the inner circle include the US and the UK. The Outer circle of English is produced by the second diaspora of English, which spread the language through imperial expansion by Great Britain in Asia and Africa. In these regions, English is not the native

tongue, but serves as a useful lingua franca among ethnic and language groups. Countries in the outer circle include Nigeria, Ghana, Malaysia and Zambia. The Expanding Circle encompasses countries where English plays no historical or governmental role, but where it is nevertheless widely used as a medium of international communication. The expanding circle include countries like Japan, Korea, China and Egypt. The inner, outer and expanding circles are normatively characterized as Norm-producing, Norm-developing and Norm-dependent users respectively. Norm-producing because language norms are developed in these countries, norm-developing because language norms of the inner circle are changed to meet the speakers communicative needs and norm-dependent because speakers rely on the standards set by the native speakers in the inner circle. This sociolinguistic scenario is also aptly captured by Quirk (1985). He categorises the inner circle as comprising English as a Native language (ENL) countries such as Great Britain, United States, Canada and Australia among others. The outer circle comprising English as Second Language (ESL) countries such as Nigeria, India, Singapore, Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Uganda and Kenya among others. The expanding circle as comprising English as a Foreign Language (EFL) countries such as Germany, Russia, China, France, Belgium, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Greece (Adedimeji, 2006). In the post-colonial contexts of the Outer Circle, one finds many people who regularly use English as a second language (ESL users), in addition to their first language. English often has official status in the country and maybe used as the medium for government business or education, and often as a national lingua franca in multilingual countries. However, the majority of the population does not necessarily use the language often, and there may be a sizeable group of native speakers.

This Kachruvian model makes English plural so that one English becomes many Englishes. Moreover, the model does not suggest that one variety is linguistically better than another is. It only suggests that English has multicultural identities (Kachru 1985, p.357). In the development of a new variety in the outer circle, there is co-existence of local languages and imported languages. This co-existence tends to influence one another and thereby bringing linguistic variations and changes at the phonological, grammatical, vocabulary, stylistic and syntactic levels of analysis. Zambia is a country or rather speech community where the local Bantu languages co-exist with an 'imported' language, English. Thus most certainly there are variations and changes in the way English is spoken as variations and changes in varieties of English are natural and inevitable (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Consequently, linguistic features, which differ from Standard English, are not necessarily errors but new components of a new English. This is because speakers of a foreign language develop norms to accommodate their communicative needs. Therefore, how these norms in the Zambia media have developed is governed by contact linguistics. Contact linguistics is a study of language contact. The phenomenon of language contact has received considerable attention from many researchers in the field of language and applied language studies over the years, including Thomason and Kaufman (1988), Thomason (2001), Weinreich (1968) and Winford (2002). Language contact occurs when two or more languages or varieties interact in a given speech community resulting in both direct and indirect influence of one or more languages on another. The most common way that languages influence each other is the exchange of words. The influence can go deeper, extending to the exchange of even basic characteristics of a language such the phonology of a language. Language contact of two languages can also result in the replacement of one by the

other. This is most common when one language has a higher social status (prestige). This sometimes leads to language endangerment or extinction. However, when language shift occurs, the language that is replaced can leave a profound impression on the replacing language, when people retain features of the substratum as they learn the new language and pass these features on to their children, leading to the development of a new variety. Language contact can also lead to the development of new languages when people without a common language interact closely, developing a pidgin, which may eventually become a full-fledged creole language through the process of creolization. According to Sebba (1997), language contact can, in some instances, lead to the formation of a pidgin, a Creole, or even the birth of a new language altogether. It is therefore common knowledge that languages can influence each other in so many ways in a language contact situation. Therefore, this study, through examining the phonological features of English as spoken by indigenous Zambians, sought to establish the extent to which the English spoken by indigenous Zambians could be said to deviate from SBE. The present study was conceived on the understanding that a situation of language contact exists between English and the Bantu languages of Zambia and thus it was assumed that language contact may have influenced the norms of RP and thus created some linguistic changes that have manifested into a 'new' variety of English in Zambia. This type of English falls under what is known as 'New' Englishes. Therefore, Kachru's spread of English and emergence of new varieties of English can be accounted for by contact linguistics. Language contact and thus geography are important factors influencing language change and development (Kortmann, 2010).

3. DISCUSSIONS

A primary concept that should be borne in mind is that 'Zambian English' (ZE) is a system of tendencies rather than categorical differences from the RP just like Ghanaian English and many other Englishes. Therefore, this discussion does not compare RP and ZE but uses RP as reference in order to understand the vocalic tendencies that occur in ZE as used in the media. The term ZE is in inverted commas as it has not yet been accepted by Educationists and other stake holders and hence not codified despite the fact that it exists. It is hoped that article will bring insight into this matter and will leave to the realization that there is need to acknowledge that English in Zambia has really been indigenized.

VOWELS

i. Monophthongs

The twelve monophthongs of RP tend to be realized as five vowels associated with Bantu languages as follows: /a, e, i, o, u/. The reduction of the twelve monophthongs into five comes about as a result of merging vowel sounds that are similar. Therefore, 'Zambian English' (ZE) monophthongs are similar to the vowels of Bantu languages spoken in Zambia.

Table 1: 'Zambian English' Vowels

VOWELS	MERGER	EXAMPLE: ZE	EXAMPLE: RP	Word
/ɪ/ & /i:/	/i/	sit sit	si:t sɪt	seat sit
/ʊ/ & /u:/	/u/	pul put	pu:l pʊt	pool put
/ʌ/ & /ɑ:/	/ɑ/	kat mak	kʌt mɑ:k	cut mark
/ɒ/ & /ɔ:/	/o/	god mo	gɒd mɔ:	god more
/ɜ:/	/e/ or /a/	fest gel	fɜ:st gɜ:l	first girl
/e/	/e/ or /a/	bari konsept	beri kɒnsept	bury concept
/æ/	/a/	kat ad	kæt æd	cat add
/ə/	/a/	lida oda	li:də ɔ:də	leader order

The substitution and merging shows that the 12 RP monophthongal system is reduced to five. The long vowels /i:, ɜ:, ɔ:/ are substituted with the short ones /ɪ, e, o/ respectively as shown in table 1 above. A clear instance of the influence of the Bantu languages vowel system is seen and can be accounted for by language contact. The vowels of ZE are the same as those of the Bantu languages spoken in Zambia. This is because the extreme range of the English vowel continuum is not covered by the underlying African systems of Bantu languages. This can be attributed to the tendency by ZE speakers to transfer rules of Bantu language pronunciations to English. A similar observation was made by Richardson's (1962) who presented a paper on *African English in Northern Rhodesia*. He observed that the RP vowel reduction by ZE speakers was due to the failure to accommodate complicated RP vowels in the African sound system. Moreover, Africa (1983) posits that the five vowel system is a result of transfer of rules resulting from the mother tongue interference. He attributed this to a possible emergence of a ZE.

ZE shows significant influences from local languages (Bantu Languages) as well as modification by way of over-generalisation. For most Zambians, acquisition of the rules, structures and phonology of any language begins with their first language as they first learn the five vowels /a, e, i, o, u/. Therefore, by the time, they begin learning English, rules from the Bantu languages would have already been mastered and all they do is transfer these into the English language. Hence, rules of the English language tend to be overshadowed by the rules that were already learnt. This affects the pronunciation as well as the grammar of the English language. Simo Bobda (1994) similarly states that as long as rules are not learnt at the early stage by the teachers, the same phenomenon goes on and on. He also alludes this to inadequate learning of reading rules by early teachers. Further, he suggests that successive batches of students imitate their teachers and in turn serve as models for future batches of students. As a

result, the same pattern of speech is transmitted intergenerationally. Similar to the current study, most studies on non-native Englishes in Africa, (Huber, 2008, Torto, 2013, Schmied, 2006) have shown that the 12 monophthongs of RP are reduced to a five vowel system or a seven vowel system (Simo Bobda, 2008) depending on the vowel system of the languages spoken in the country of interest.

ii. Diphthongs

RP is endowed with eight diphthongs. The VV structure of diphthongs is reduced to a V or VCV structure in ZE. This can be alluded to the fact that there is an influence from the phonotactics of the Bantu languages spoken in Zambia in that they do not allow the VV sequence. The basic syllable sequence for Zambian Bantu languages is CV-CV-CV. Therefore, there is a tendency to insert consonants/ semi-vowels specifically glides /j/ or /w/ in the middle of the diphthongs thus realizing a VCV structure through the process of glide epenthesis. The insertion is associated with the fact that the Bantu languages of the country have a CV syllable structure. This then explains why ZE speakers in the Zambian media tend to break the diphthongs by inserting a glide. The RP diphthongs are realized as monophthongs, which are realized directly or split over two syllables through the phonological process of glide epenthesis. However, two of the diphthongs are monophthongized as illustrated in (a) below.

a) Diphthongs realized as monophthongs are as follows.

- /eɪ/ realized as /e/ as in examples below:

Away /awe/ instead of /əweɪ/

Late /let/ instead of /leɪt/

- /əʊ/ realized as /o/ as in examples below:

No /no/ instead of /nəʊ/

Chosen /tʃozen/ instead of /tʃəʊzn/

b) Diphthongs are also rendered as monophthongs through glide epenthesis as illustrated in table 2 below.

Table 2: Treatment of Diphthongs in ‘Zambian English’

Diphthongs	word	RP	ZE	ZE-Realisation
/ɪə/	Here	/hɪə/	/hije/	/ije/
	Tear	/tɪə/	/tije/	
/ʊə/	Poor	/pʊə/	/puwa/	/uwa/
	Tour	/tʊə/	/tuwa/	
/aɪ/	Eye	/aɪ/	/aji/	/aji/
	Like	/laɪk/	/lark/	
/ɔɪ/	Boy	/bɔɪ/	/boi/	/oji/
	Voice	/vɔɪs/	/vojis/	
/eə/	Air	/eə/	/eja/	/eja/
	There	/ðeə/	/ðeja/	
/aʊ/	Cloud	/klaʊd/	/klawud/	/awu/
	Now	/naʊ/	/nawu/	

Thus, the two ways of how diphthongs are treated all show how they are monophthongized. Unconsciously, speakers of ZE tend to apply the process of monophthongization of diphthongs. Many studies conducted on varieties of English show the same results shown in this study. These include Schmied (2006), Huber (2008), De Klerk and Gough (2002), Simo Bobda (2008), Trudgill and Hannah (2008) and Baskaran (2008). Similarly, Simukoko's (1977) study on *some features of a Zambian variety of English with particular reference to Bemba speakers* also agrees with the fact that diphthongs tend to be rendered as disyllabic words. For instance, the monosyllabic words now /naʊ/, air /eə/ and voice /vɔɪs/ are realized as disyllabic words /nawu/, /eja/ and /vojɪs/ respectively. The insertion of the /w/ and /j/ splits the monosyllabic words into disyllabic words.

iii. Triphthongs

The findings have further shown that triphthongs in ZE are simplified through the phonological process of substitution as illustrated in table 3 below:

Table 3: Realisation of Triphthongs in 'Zambian English'

Triphthong	Word	RP	ZE	ZE-realisation
eɪə	Player Pair	/pleɪə/ /peɪə/	/pleja/ /peja/	/eja/
aɪə	Desire Fire	/dɪ'zəɪə/ /faɪə/	/dizaja/ /faja/	/aja/
ɔɪə	Employer	/ɪm'plɔɪə/	/ɪmploja/	/oja/
aʊə	Hour	/aʊə/	/awa/	/awa/
əʊə	Lower	/ləʊə/	/lowa/	/owa/

From the data in table 3 above, it is seen that /i/ is substituted with /j/ and /ʊ/ with /w/. The substitution results from the fact that Zambian languages do not have triphthongs and the fact that the elements share similar articulatory features. /ʊ/ and /w/ are both rounded, back and high while /i/ and /j/ are both [+high], [-round] and [+coronal]. And the schwa /ə/ at the end of each triphthong is realized as /a/. This supports Jenkins (2006) statement that African Englishes tend to produce the schwa sound as a full vowel /a/ at the end of words

VOWEL LENGTH

Vowel length in ZE as used in the media is hardly realized, because the five long vowels are systematically replaced by short vowels. The shortening of vowels is a common trend. This is because of the influence of the Bantu languages of Zambia vowel system. Vowel length is symbolized by [:] and of the 12 RP monophthongs, five have the quality of length. ZE does not render vowel length, as there is a tendency to shorten long vowels

Table 4: Rendition of Long Vowels

Word	RP pronunciation	ZE pronunciation
Reason	/ri:zn/	/rizon/
Lead	/li:d/	/lid/
Farming	/fa:miŋ/	/famiŋ/
Mark	/ma:k/	/mak/
Draw	/drɔ:/	/dro/
Law	/lɔ:/	/lo/
You	/ju:/	/ju/
Lose	/lu:z/	/luz/
First	/fɜ:st/	/fest/
Learn	/lɜ:n/	/len/

The Zambian local languages do not use length to distinguish between two similar words but orthographically represent it by a pair of the vowel sound. And tone in the languages help distinguish similar word. Therefore, the major explanation for vowel length reduction is that Zambian languages have no phonological long vowels. Vowel length in Zambian languages is predictable and non-contrastive. Vowel length reduction is partially caused by under-differentiation of phonemes. Under-differentiation is when two sounds similar in the secondary system (English) whose counterparts are not distinguished in the primary (Zambian languages) system are confused (Weinreich, 1953). Therefore, due to under-differentiation, ZE speakers have fewer or no vowel contrasts than English. As Jenkins (2006) postulates that vowel inventories of ‘new’ Englishes in Africa distinguish minimally if at all between the short and long vowels of RP English. The findings thus revealed that most ZE speakers as shown in the media do not make the length contrasts.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it could indeed be said that the widespread of English use in Zambia has influenced or reshaped the type of English spoken in the Zambian media. The findings are indicative of the fact that the English spoken in Zambia as used in the media is a different variety from RP. The pronunciation trends in the English used in the media show that most ZE speakers seem to have a segmentally distinct variety spoken in Zambia. This can be attributed to the fact that the Bantu languages of the country seem to heavily influence the pronunciation of English words.

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