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## Languaging ethnicity and decolonising language ideologies in Cameroon contemporary urban music

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the relationship between standard language ideologies and ethnicity as performed in music. This is premised against the assumption that research on language and race/ethnicity has tended to focus more on institutional settings and how ideologies about race or ethnicity are (re) produced and sustained through language policies and practices in these settings while little is done to account for how these tendencies are performed out of institutional settings. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines two Cameroonian songs as sites wherein ideologies about standard language are sustained and challenged. The ethnicisation of linguistic sounds in one True Feelings permeates a colonial tendency establishing the standard norm versus the non-standard variety between British English and Cameroon English or New Englishes in general. The purported Standard English is depicted as the norm against which deviant forms are judged. This tendency is decolonised Be Proud wherein plea is made to diversity and linguistic plurality as the alternation between different sound forms and structures is associated to the creative potential of the language. The analysis therefore demonstrates that there is need to consider and amplify the enormous research in the emerging field of Raciolinguistics by extending the debate into informal settings where such ideological work is either sustained or challenged.

**Keywords:** Decolonisation, Ethnicity, Ideology, New englishes, Standard language

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### 1. Introduction

Post independence language practices in British former colonies continue to foster linguistic domination and through specific interactional and institutional contexts. Post colonial subjects are aligned as linguistically deficient and often stigmatised and subjected to neo colonial language remediation ideologies imbedded in English language teaching practices (Flores, 2015; Hattum, 2018; Rosa & Flores, 2017). These linguistic practices have meant that in post independence Cameroon like elsewhere in Africa new centres and margins are created with an ideological function of positioning them as linguistically efficient/deficient and civilised/uncivilised respectively. The new centres represent those whose linguistic practices are constructed as near native speakers' proficiency while the margins represent those whose linguistic realisations are relegated to the peripheries of knowledge and civilisation (Anchimbe, 2009).

In 2011 one of the upcoming artists in Cameroon known as Ice Eric released a song titled 'True Feelings' in which he made fun of tribes across the North West region of Cameroon by discursively associating girls from these tribes to a wide range of negative linguistic and social behavioural patterns. Though this song touched several tribes in the region and associated them with different negative stereotypes it was only the Nso tribe that became pronounced and the subject of widespread stigmatisation afterwards. The musician linked this tribe to oral English production deficiency by focusing on the /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/, /əʊ/ and /ɔ/ sounds of *boy*, *girl*, *own* and *call* respectively. What appeared as a comedy piece

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attracted attention of the public and provoked widespread condemnation from the Nso community in and out of Cameroon who saw this as an attack on their identity, on the one hand, and set the pace for sustained linguistic prejudice and discrimination against this tribe from other tribes across the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. The purported realisation of the vowel sounds of *boy*, *own* and *call* as /u:/ in the music has also been a subject of study in Cameroon English pronunciation. This song, therefore, is examined as a master piece in (re) producing and legitimising ideologies about standard language, correctness and prestige.

The expression '*dat boy na ma boy*' which became famous soon after the release of this piece of music is the premise against which this paper argues that the expression discursively invokes the image of backwardness and unintelligibility about the Nso tribe. This expression has been used in Cameroon for the past nine years and has become synonymous to English language pronunciation deficiency especially among English-speaking Cameroonians. It has bundled and packaged the Nso people and their neighbouring tribes into an oral-English deficient 'other' amongst English-speaking Cameroonians.

This ideological positioning of the Nso people and its neighbours as a quintessence of 'bad' or 'poor' English language speakers vis-a-vis other English-speaking Cameroonians in the song led to widespread discrimination and stigmatisation of this tribe in relation to their English language practices both in interactional and institutional settings. In daily interactions between these packaged 'other' and the rest of the English population there has been substantial stigmatisation experienced. Travelling from Dschang to Limbe in the South West region of Cameroon in 2014 I was mocked by a classmate who claimed I realised the vowel sound in coast as /u:/ by linking my purported poor pronunciation to my Nso origin even though I am not a native of this tribe. I equally faced the same stigmatisation and disparagement in another instance while travelling from Dschang to Bamenda from a lady I just happened to be travelling with in the same car. These instances coupled with other instances which I noticed in several other occasions and in online platforms first appeared to me to be negligible. I started thinking otherwise when I witnessed anger exhibited by a native of Nso during a post graduate conference at the University of Bamenda in 2018 when the purported Nso pronunciation was used as a basis for judging 'correctness' and 'poor' pronunciation patterns in Cameroon English usage.

In 2020 another upcoming Cameroonian artist from the Nso land called Witty Minstrel released a counter narrative to Ice Eric's disparagement titled 'Be Proud'. This music that is currently attracting a lot of attention on social media platforms is imbued with ideologies about language and identity and a sense of belonging and fulfilment which challenge standard language ideology. This is the assumption against which this paper is premised to demonstrate that this counter narrative is an extended call for the valorisation and celebration of African varieties or forms of English that still continue to occupy peripheral positions in the English language world. This piece celebrates and places linguistic diversity at the centre as against the dogmatic tendency perpetrated through standard language ideologies which favour linguistic imperialism by promoting one or some varieties of any given language as the 'appropriate' and 'correct' way of expression. While this piece may appear to celebrate and reclaim the Nso identity in public spaces in Cameroon it is argued in this paper that it is a decolonising piece. It is imbued with ideologies which seek to dis-centre the much debate about language and ethnicity by recognising and valorising non-native English language varieties as sources of diversity rather than seeing them as deficient forms of the language. The continued framing of these forms as deficient forms underpins the teaching and learning of the language across the globe today. Non native English forms continue to be framed in English language teaching discourse as problems necessitating remediation (Rosa & Flores, 2017; Pennycook, 2017; Rosa, 2018; Escobar, 2019; Hattum, 2018).

## **2. An overview of the English language in Cameroon**

The English language is one of the two official languages of Cameroon, the other being French. The language is used predominantly in the two Anglophone regions where it is the lone medium of instruction and also taught as a subject in schools. In other regions of the country the language is simply taught as a subject in schools. This language plays an important role in education in the two Anglophone regions, the North West and South West regions. Students are expected to pass the language which is taught as a subject, at least, at the Ordinary level before they can gain admission into any of the two state Universities found in these regions. A pass in the subject is equated with proficiency in the language and considered as proof of the fact that one can learn and carry out research in the language like the case with other related tests including TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), and others. Though the language policy of Cameroon fails to make reference to the British variety as the variety to be promoted in schools it is covertly established as the model and propagated through language textbooks and evaluation materials. This is the variety teachers are expected to teach their learners. In Cameroon, therefore, the expression English language is equated to British English even though American English has also established its tentacles in the country (Mbibeh, 2013).

The English language in Cameroon has undergone indigenisation or has been appropriated and adapted like in any post colonial setting. With the emergence of New Englishes Cameroon has also established its standard or mainstream for the language. Despite numerous articles and books published on Cameroon Standard English, this variety is yet to be integrated into the language teaching and learning practices in the country (Anchimbe, 2009; Ngeufac, 2005, 2008; Mbibeh, 2013). There is a debate as to the use and attitude of Cameroonians towards Cameroon English. While Ngeufac argues for the promotion of this variety as against the British variety which he considers an illusion Essosomo, (2016) debunks this premise citing structural lapses and lack of pedagogic materials. In a similar vein

Atechi and Angwah, (2016) postulate that Cameroonians portray a negative attitude towards Cameroon English as they prefer British Standard English. This study, however, contradicts the results of an empirical field study carried out by Ngeufac, (2008) with focus on attitudes of Cameroonians towards Cameroon English accent. This study revealed that a majority of Cameroonians preferred Cameroon English accent against British accent. Both studies, however, complement each other in revealing the complex psycho-social variables and ideologies which underpin English language practices in post colonial Cameroon.

### **3. Literature review**

Much research on language (specifically the English language), race and ethnicity has focused on how the teaching and learning of the English language across the globe today continue to position former colonised peoples as problems in relation to their language practices. Rosa and Flores (2015, 2017) investigated the language teaching approaches in education and revealed that appropriate-based approaches in language education which seek to promote standard linguistic practices are imbued with racial ideologies which position language learners' practices as deficient due to their racial affiliations irrespective of their actual language proficiency level. This view is corroborated by Rosa, (2016, 2018) and Anchimbe, (2009) by arguing that the connection between language and race and the ranking of language varieties serve a colonial agenda through the imposition of European-based ideologies Martínez (2016) in a similar paper addresses the issue of racism in education by revealing ideologies that circulate and legitimised institutionalised language practices at the expense of non-institutionalised or non standard forms which are stigmatised. This paper demonstrates that racism is being constructed and performed continuously in education through specific language practices. Pennycook (2017) equally buttresses this perspective by questioning the spread of English as an international language. He postulates that the language teachers continue to be agents of imperialism. The teaching practices promotes social and economic inequalities which benefit the specific institutions such as the British Council responsible for the promotion of the British variety that remains the variety promoted as the 'norm' in most former colonised countries. These research works which seek to challenge ethnic and racial segregation in English language education across the globe emerged as a response to the emergence of new English forms which have been termed New Englishes. These forms emerge as the language takes up new identities in regions where it competes with other local languages. Much research has been done to this effect and has challenged teaching practices which seek to promote the British variety as the 'norm'. Ngeufac (2005) challenged these practices in Cameroon and argued that the promotion of the British variety in Cameroon is an unattainable goal citing the absence of native teachers as the cause. This view was buttressed by Mbibeh, (2013) who revealed after field work that the language teachers in Cameroon use a creative mix of British English, American English and Cameroon English in teaching without knowing these differences.

While the above perspectives focus on language practices in formal educational contexts and how these practices endorse ethnic and racial marginalisation there is need for the debate to be extended to other domains of human life where these ideologies can also be (re) produced and or challenged. It is from this perspective that this paper seeks to investigate Cameroon contemporary urban music as a site where ideologies about language and ethnicity are performed and or challenged. Post colonial linguistic practices in the erstwhile colonies such as Cameroon are still imbued with Eurocentric ideologies of purity and savagery as the native varieties continue to be the norm or standard while other varieties are mere deviations or incorrect. Non native varieties or dialects are subjected to remediation as a means of lifting the speakers of these 'sub' varieties to near native competence. Permeating such linguistic classification and alignment is an ideological paradigm which features the "us versus them" dichotomy wherein the "us" represents the "norm" while the "them" whose language practices are deficient, incarnate backwardness and savagery. While these ideologies were/are coded in colonial language policy practices and promoted in formal and institutional context such as education and the media, music also offers an avenue where these ideologies could be (re) produced, endorsed and or subverted through specific discourses.

### **4. Research objectives**

This paper seeks to examine Cameroon contemporary urban music as a medium through which ethnic stereotypes which jeopardise intercultural communication and understanding are (re) produced, spread and or challenged through language. The paper, therefore, examines:

- Music as a medium of linguistic exclusion which can augment social, economic and political inequalities between different ethnic groups based on their language practices, and
- How music can be used as a decolonising tool in bridging such inequalities, erasing stereotypes and stigmatisation against certain groups in multilingual contexts.

### **5. Theoretical framework of analysis**

This paper is inspired by Raciolinguistics which is a critical approach to the study of language, racism, ethnicity and ideology. This approach draws from diverse fields including linguistics, anthropology, sociology, etc in order to reveal and challenged inequalities which are enacted through language teaching and learning practices. Raciolinguistics is an emerging sociolinguistic approach which takes interest in investigating the discursive relationship between language ideologies, the notion of standard language and race/ethnic based ideologies. It is also concerned with how these

ideologies are enacted and or challenged through language teaching and learning practices and how such discursive practices foster social, economic and political inequalities amongst groups based on their language practices (Alim, Rickford & Ball, 2016; Hattum, 2018; Rosa, 2016, 2018; Rosa & Flores, 2015, 2017). The point of focus in this theoretical perspective is that the spread of the English language across the globe and its associated international status vis-a-vis other languages continues to enhance colonial based ideologies of superiority and inferiority. This stems from the fact that despite the emergence of new forms or varieties of the language in areas where the language is used the tendency is still to mainstream the British variety as the 'norm' in most non-native countries especially those which were under the British colonial rule. The emerging regional and national varieties which are often termed Non-Native Englishes, New Englishes, Indigenised Varieties, etc are not only absent from mainstream educational discourse but are stigmatised as representing deficient and unintelligible varieties rather than fostering the creative potential of the language (Anchimbe, 2009).

These appellations have stigmatising colourations as they all recognise the existence of a mother variety which serves as a 'standard' against which variation and deviation are judged. In English language teaching discourse this has meant that the acquisition of near native speaker's proficiency is linked to social variables such as intelligibility and prestige while the production of deviant forms continue to be a source of shame and stigma necessitating remediation. By so doing the teaching of the English language across the globe has tended to favour inequalities amongst the different language users through continued mainstreaming of colonial based ideologies as those ridden in terms such as 'appropriate language', 'correct language use' etc. This has not only fostered cultural and linguistic imperialism between the British and its former colonised peoples (Pennycook, 2018) but has also created another source of colonialism where other post colonial subjects are doubly colonised. While former colonial subjects are all stigmatised as emblems of deficient and deviant English forms other groups within former colonised peoples are made objects of mockery as based on their language practices.

This is the perspective from which this paper departs to demonstrate that the (re) production of ethnic stereotypes based on language practices in Cameroon contemporary urban music is an extension of standard language ideology and acceptability and or correctness mainstreamed in language education discourse in education and other institutional contexts. These ideologies are equally subverted through the same medium where standardness is challenged and plea made to linguistic diversity as a post colonial strength and worth.

## **6. The data and method**

This paper analyses two songs produced in 2011 and 2020 by two emerging Cameroonian musicians. The rationale for the selection of the two songs is justified by their thematic issues raised therein which tie with the focus of this paper. The first music, *True Feelings*, released in 2011 by Ice Eric is a comic depiction of Nso girls' pronunciation based on their ethnic affiliations which is imbued with standard language ideologies and ideologies on the influence of home languages on English language performance. This song is analysed as an extended metaphor for racialised and ethnicised linguistic practices in post colonial Cameroon and Africa at large. The second music, *Be Proud*, by Witty Minstrel released in 2020 is a counter narrative of Ice Eric's *True Feelings*. This song is an appeal to the recognition of local varieties and identities by advocating self recognition and fulfilment. This song is examined as an extended metaphor for decolonising and challenging standard language ideologies and advocating for, and reclaiming the pride of place for local varieties and languages. The songs were downloaded from Youtube and the excerpts analysed herein were translated from Pidgin English and Lamso into English for easy understanding.

## **7. Analysis and discussion**

### **7.1. Linguaging ethnicity in *true feelings*: Pronunciation ethnicised**

*'Dat boy na ma boy...answer your phone call'*

*/dat boi: na mai boi:...aɲsa ja fɔn kɔl/*

Canagarajah, (2005) posits that modernism and globalisation have been constituted into specific discourses which reinforce the colonial status quo in which former colonised people and their knowledge continue to be looked upon as savage necessitating cleansing in order to measure up to what is considered 'civilised'. This view is buttressed by Bhatt, (2005) who argues that even with the recognition of diversity with the emergence of New Englishes such dichotomies still exist as the varieties termed as new continue to be regarded as deviating from the norm (native speakers' variety); standard versus non standard forms. This distinction has created numerous social, economic and political inequalities. It is from this perspective that Ice Eric's *True Feelings* is examined as a masterpiece which reinforces tribal prejudice and stigmatisation through the ethnicisation of the English language by discursively associating and creating deviating phonological sounds purported to be the resultant effect of ethnic affiliations and local languages. This song sets the stage for the competition between the standard forms and non standard forms or the so called native and non native varieties at the expense of the latter. The non native variety is coded as a source of shame as the local language is seen as tainting rather than colouring the English language as seen in the excerpt below.

...I comot Mendankwe say na Banso girl, I reach for Banso land, weti I see about Banso girl, Banso girl dem too ova nice. Banso girl dem be very beautiful and the girl dem be welcoming, na one tin di vex me about Banso girls, fine Banso girl dem no know how pronounce. When Banso girl wan say, dat boy na boy, e go say 'dat bui na ma bui, dat go (girl) na ma go (girl), da fufu na ma uwn (own) answer your phone cul (call), your telephone e di ring...haaahaaahaaa...contri tok all the time, contri tok sotey time no deyy...

*...My next choice after Mendankwe was to marry a girl from Nso. As I arrived Nso I noticed that Nso girls are very nice, beautiful and welcoming. But what irritates me about beautiful Nso girls is their poor pronunciation. They realise the /ɔ:/ sound of boy as /u:/, the /əʊ/ sound of own as /u/ and the /ɔ/ of call as /u/... haaahaaahaaa...the influence of their first language (Lamsɔ) which they speak every time...(My translation)*

The musician begins by declaring that he loves girls from Nso but for the irritating poor pronunciation of the beautiful girls from this tribe. Their purported poor pronunciation is projected as sufficient reason for him not to choose a girl from this tribe as a wife. By implication for a girl to measure up to the standard of a wife she should be able to pronounce 'properly'. Pronunciation here is interpreted as a metaphor for deviant forms which are termed New Englishes produced by former colonial subjects. The comic piece, therefore, ridicules non native accented English varieties while exalting the standard norm which the musician purports to speak. This song endorses purists' and Standard English language ideologies by establishing differential pronunciation patterns between the 'norm' and the non standard forms wherein the latter is considered a sub echelon and associated low prestige and backwardness. Non-native forms are ethnicised and stigmatised through the discursive relationship established between deviant forms and the first or local languages of the non native speakers. From the excerpt above, the backup singer contends that the 'poor' pronunciation of the Nso girls is due to their attachment to their native language which is claimed influences the English language negatively. This premise establishes the 'us' and 'them' paradigm in which the former embodies civilised ways (norm) and the latter is relegated to the periphery in every sense of the word.

Such linguistic practices in post colonial settings like Cameroon continue to foster and reproduce colonial ideologies such as those imbedded in standard language, linguistic purity, language and intelligibility, etc (Pennycook, 2018; Escobar, 2019; Martinez & Martínez, 2016; Rosa, 2016). Despite the unattainable goal of transforming and uniformising the speech patterns within the English speaking community and the proven creativity and potential of English language the tendency is still to pursue the unattainable goal. New varieties of the English language which have sprung up due to the ecological and socio-cultural realities of the communities where the language is used and each of these communities has developed its unique variety which is as expressive as any other variety. However, these varieties which are termed deviant forms continue to be maintained at peripheral positions in institutional settings. In most colonial settings like Cameroon Received Pronunciation is the promoted variety in schools while anything different is looked upon with disdain and scorn. While new patterns in the language are looked upon with contempt it is worthwhile noting that such practices are imbued with ethnic ideologies which foster the native and non native speakers divide in which the latter is the backward other. Such tendencies and practices promote standard language ideologies and endorse inequalities by seeking to associate different linguistic practices to ethnic and or racial affiliations.

## **7.2. Re-centring the debate between native and non native English standards**

### **Decolonising 'dat boy na ma boy...answer your phone call' in *Be Proud***

Colonialism which was ushered in by modernism created a gap between Europe and the rest of the world through codified discourses which empowered western-based knowledge and ideas over those of the colonised peoples. The dichotomy established between western-based practices and non western practices by colonial discourses which were ridden with racial and ethnic discriminatory ideologies survived into the post colonial era though codified in other colonial mantles. Stretching the debate into linguistic practices in post colonial settings where English has successfully been established as the lingua franca and as the official and working language in most countries, such colonising discourses imbued with discriminatory ideologies which endorse inequalities still abound in institutional and informal settings. Globalisation has also meant a sort of competition between the local and the global in which the global is western while the local is non western. In this global competition the local is expected to undergo improvement in order to fit into the global that is established as the norm. Such tendencies have meant that the local is still considered backward and has to be improved upon in order to meet the global standards. This modern tendency is intimated by Canagarajah, (2005; 16) who argues that:

...“the most concerted campaign to denigrate local knowledge at the global level begins with modernism; for a community to be considered civilised, it has to discard the practices associated with its locale, which, for modernism, is a sign of backwardness. Colonialism spread these values of modernism beyond Europe, so that the local knowledge of colonised communities began to be suppressed in the name of civilisation by European nations”...

The tendency survived into late modernism as articulated by Bhatt (2005) who postulates that the struggle between the global and the local is most prominent and visible through linguistic practices as New Englishes continue to be regarded as deviant forms by native linguists who use western varieties as standard forms against which non western varieties are judged and placed under remediation or purification (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

Recent tendencies show that advancement is being made towards the recognition of local varieties and standards but such improvement is still limited to the academia as language policy and practices within institutional settings are yet to embrace this new trend. Research within the field has argued for the integration of additive approaches to language education which are endowed with creative potentials as against subtractive approaches which are suppressive and futile but it is unfortunate this is yet to be implemented in most countries like Cameroon (Flores & Rosa, 2015). It is against this backdrop that this song ‘*Be Proud*’ is examined as a meaning-making potential piece aimed at challenging standard language ideologies which have denigrated the local in favour of the global and re-centring the debate towards the recognition of linguistic diversity and its creative potential.

The debate between native and non native standards of English has tended to ignore the role of the non native speakers in endorsing these Eurocentric standard language ideologies which relegate their language practices. Non native speakers tend to regard their linguistic practices which are incongruent with those of native speakers as deficient and require purging through remediation. The speakers of these new varieties usually regard their speech patterns with scorn and contempt through ethnicising discourses which endorse monoglossic language ideologies in which the stated standard variety is represented as the ideal variety to which non speakers aspire. This song is as such a call for the recognition and celebration of local accented varieties by their speakers in order to subvert ideologies which promote linguistic discrimination and favour inequalities at all levels. The excerpt below is translated from the original song parts of which are written in Lamso. For easy understanding the excerpt is rendered entirely in English and those written in Pidgin English are equally translated into English.

*...Let nobody be missing in the world. We are the sons and daughters of Ngonso, we are proud of who we are. We are confused, we are struggling; we are the sons and daughters of Ngonso, we are proud of who we are... (Nso boy wey dem no get me dat tongue, da moto jam da girl putam for gutter...ma telephone di ring make I answer ma phone call...Nso boys who do not have that tongue (used here to mean the poor pronunciation), that car knocked down that girl who fell into a gutter...my telephone is ringing; let me answer my telephone call...my translation into English)*

The excerpt above transcribed from the lyrics of the song ‘*Be Proud*’ is a counter narrative of ‘*True Feelings*’. Unlike the latter which is imbued with linguistic ethnocentrism through its mock style the former calls for linguistic diversity and the recognition of local knowledge in language practices. The musician focuses on the vowel sounds of *girl*, *gutter*, and *call* which he comically realises as /u:/ in response to the ethnicisation of this vowel sound in ‘*True Feelings*’. By repeating the expression ‘*ma telephone di ring make I answer ma phone call*’ (my telephone is ringing; let me answer my telephone call) he deconstructs the ethnicised accent and claims ownership of it with pride and esteem. By discursively alternating between English, Pidgin English and his home language-Lamso and by employing both the basilect and hypercorrect sounds in this song he establishes a decolonising trend in language practices in post colonial settings. The opening line of the song is an open call for the recognition of varieties and the creative potential of diversity, on the one hand, and the danger posed by monoglossic ideologies which favour standard language ideologies against diversity. Such monoglossic ideologies are a source of language death and, by extension, cultural identity loss. This piece of song therefore serves as a masterpiece wherein ethnic based English language practices are no longer going to be regarded as deficient and backwardness and unintelligibility.

While this song was produced as a reaction to salvage the image of the Nso tribe in Cameroon which has been for close to a decade and counting subjected to linguistic stigmatisation based on their English language practices, it is examined in this paper as an extended allegory dis-centring and re-centring the debate between the so called native varieties of English and non native varieties. For over the years native varieties which are not uniform have been looked and treated as norms while non native varieties are regarded merely as deviant forms which result from the inability of their speakers to learn and produce native structures appropriately. Such purported inability has been linked to the influence of their home languages which are looked upon as tainting and soiling the English language rather than

colouring and improving its creative potential. This created a dichotomy between what Flore & Rosa, (2015) refer to as the 'white listening subject' and the 'black learning subject' wherein the former is the norm provider and the latter is the norm dependent.

### **8. Implications and contribution to knowledge**

The advocacy for the decolonisation of language ideologies in post colonial settings like Cameroon from monoglossic language ideologies towards the recognition and promotion of linguistic diversity has gone for quite some time yet the tendency in most institutional contexts is still to uphold certain language practices as superior to others. While the term New Englishes continues to appear in the literature within the academia little efforts are being made at the level of language policy and planning to recognise and promote these varieties that continue to linger in the suburbs and being tagged as deviant forms. There is yet another disturbing tendency that the stigmatisation directed against the so called non native varieties of English is often looked upon as a top-bottom phenomenon. Much research has focused attention on the role played at the level of language policy and planning which favour certain varieties at the expense of others by institutionalising them but little has been done to account for how such institutional endorsement is sustained or challenged through informal contexts. A lot has been said about how the teaching and learning of English across the globe is imbued with ideologies which (re) produce and sustain ethnic and racial inequalities thereby enacting economic and political inequalities globally (Flore & Rosa, 2015, 2017, 2019; Funie, 2017; Martínez, 2016; Pennycook & Sultana, 2017; Pennycook, 2017).

Globalisation and global trends have meant that the global is western while the local has to undergo improvement in the global trends; a tendency which has currently attracted research attention. Taking the debate into applied linguistics the tendency is for the so called New Englishes to be improved upon to the level of the native tongue. Speaking a variety other than the prescribed norm is regarded as a sign of backwardness and a source of shame. This accounts for the numerous linguistic centres and English language pamphlets in post colonial settings like Cameroon which are monoglossic favouring the British variety. It is from this perspective that this paper proposes a bottom-top approach in sustaining and or subverting standardness in language practices in post colonial settings by looking at how this can be achieved out of the educational setting.

### **9. Conclusion**

This paper sought to examine the relationship between standard language ideologies and ethnicity in selected Cameroonian urban songs. This was done against the assumption that the tendency has been to research on this relationship only in formal settings. This paper, therefore, intended to make a contribution by demonstrating that such ideological work is also performed out of formal contexts. The tendency to isolate and associate certain linguistic practices in post-colonial contexts like Cameroon as revealed in the analysis above serves a colonial agenda. The linguistic practices of such subjects are constructed as deficient, thereby, producing the "white listening subject" and the "black learning subject". This ideological predisposition is at the core of English language learning across the world today which has created inequalities at all levels between the native variety and the non-native varieties.

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