

WORD ACCENTUAL PATTERNS IN GUYANESE ENGLISH (GE) COMPARED WITH BRITISH ENGLISH (RP NORM)

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The following is a set of rules for the transformation of RP accentual patterns into GE. Examples are from Gimson 1970:228-230.

1. GE PATTERNS PREDICTABLE FROM RP

1. *Pattern similarities.* — GE has a similar accentual pattern to RP in the following cases:

(1) When the accent falls on the final syllable in RP. Examples: unknown, Chinese, alone, understand, entertain.

(2) When the accent falls on the penultimate syllable in words of three or more syllables in RP. Examples: important, foreknowledge, tobacco, September, education, unrealistic.

(3) When the accent falls on the initial syllable in RP, in words of two syllables whose final syllable carries a secondary accent. Examples: profile, placard, female, invoice, programme, radio, yellow, hollow, swallow; *exceptions*: GE windów, pillów, rebáte.

(4) When the accent falls on the antepenultimate syllable in RP, in words whose final syllable is unaccented. Examples: arithmetic, catholic, lunatic, rhetoric, allergy, quantity, tendency, innocence, bachelor, sensible, impossible, unfortunate. *Exceptions*: GE yellowish, Bailiewick, mánáger, bícýcle, bãnníster, cálóndar, cǎrpénter, mńníster, pássénger.

2. *Pattern deviations.* —

(1) When the accent falls on the antepenultimate or the ante-antepenultimate syllable in RP, in words whose final syllable carries secondary accentuation, the accent is shifted to the final syllable in GE. Examples: constitute, appetite, realize, photograph, telephone, acclimatize, enumerate, capitulate, almanac, capitalize (pronounced in GE, constitúte, appetíte, etc). *Exceptions*: GE cátaract, Árawak, acétylene.

(2) When the accent falls on the ante-antepenultimate syllable in RP, in words whose final syllable is unaccented, the accent is shifted to the penultimate syllable in GE.

Examples: caterpillar, criticism, appetizing, educated, catholicism, empiricism, television (pronounced in GE caterpillár, criticísm, etc.).

2. PATTERNS IN GE NOT PREDICTABLE FROM RP

In words of two syllables whose final syllable is unaccented, place of accent seems to be arbitrary in GE. Examples are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Accent on		Accent on	
Initial syllable	final syllable	Initial	final
battle	bottle	silly	Billie
wrestle	table	valley	Mary
mallet	wallet	better	fairy
porridge	orange	butter	jelly
selfish	greenish	hammer	alley
basic	Patrick	later	water
coward	voodoo	pepper	paper
dozen	taboo	doctor	finger
husband	cotton	feature	picture
rhythm			hassar

Exceptions: father, brother, mother, over, etc.: distinctive accent: fáther = progenitor; fathér = member of clergy. School ovér = school is over; but, come óver; *under*-one hears both *únder* and *undér* without difference to meaning.

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REFERENCE

Gimson, A.C.
1970 *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English* (London, Edward Arnold).

DISCUSSION

WELLS (London)

I am sceptical of the *can/can't* tone difference claimed for Jamaican Creole, having witnessed a misunderstanding between JC speakers due precisely to the ambiguity of /kja:n/. It is difficult to sort out the respective roles of stress, intonation and

vowel length in such cases; but I believe that extra stress and/or special intonation are used with *can/can't* to mark the change of polarity from *can* to *can't* rather than to distinguish either of them as such from the other.

Your most important claim concerns the stress difference you mention between pairs such as *bottlé* and *báttle* in Guyanese English. If this does indeed indicate a lexical stress difference rather than a generally applicable device for emphasis by stress-shift, you have discovered a very interesting phenomenon.

HOLDER

The stress difference is lexical.

OLSEN (Toronto)

1. Does accent tend to appear more near the end of the word in Guyanese than in Received Pronunciation?

2. If question (1) is answered in the affirmative, is this tendency due to a language substratum?

HOLDER

Shift of accent is due to the West-African substratum; there is no influence of French.