The title of this little book is difficult to parse, but an examination reveals that it consists of a discussion of the origin of Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) and its usage in the nation, a discussion of its orthography, a grammar (including word-building processes); samples of extemporaneous discourse; a dictionary; and a bibliography that is restricted to works on this language, only some of which are cited. As for its origin, the author adopts the view of other African writers, who claim that it arose during the slave-trade period, 1400–1800, when Cameroonians picked up English from British privateers working for the Portuguese. He believes, we learn in other publications, that CPE is only a contact language which dominates the neighbourhood domain and is dying, while English varieties are becoming less important at the expense of French, the dominant language of education, the media, and civil service.

The author is Associate Professor since 2005 at the University of Yaounde I, Cameroon, where he teaches applied linguistics. His research interests, we learn elsewhere, are sociolinguistics, language policy and planning, language in education, French-English bilingualism and biliteracy, and New Englishes. Many of his publications are listed in his bibliography, but incompletely. And although he lists some of the works of his colleague P. N. Mbangwana, he ignores others. Research for this book was undertaken in 2006–2007, during which time he tape recorded radio broadcasts in CPE, resulting in a corpus of 200 sixty-minute tapes, all of which have been transcribed. However, it is not clear how they were used.

The book attempts to provide a bird’s-eye-view of CPE, but its purpose is not clear. The book is certainly not pedagogical. It contributes nothing to the study of other varieties of Pidgin English in West Africa, not even that of neighboring Nigeria (NPE). One is left wondering if NPE and CPE should be distinguished in any way. He does not mention the magnificent work of Nicolas Faraclas (1996), whose grammar is now selling for over $300.00! And the volume under review does not relate itself to three other works, listed in the bibliography, that concern themselves with CPE. Most puzzling is the absence of Kouega (2007), which has a similar title.

Anyone familiar with some form of African Pidgin English will find nothing new in Kouega’s Dictionary, and most of what is said is superficial and antiquated, or naïve, from a linguistic point of view. The section on grammar, for example, begins as follows: ‘Traditionally, the words making up some languages like English have been grouped into units referred to as parts of speech’ (p.33) Among the many things that one would have liked to learn more about is the function of stress and pitch in the language. High and low tones occur on words derived from Cameroonian indigenous languages, including the words for cod fish and dried herring. The word for ‘a young girl one desires’, munienge, must certainly have an origin in some Bantu language, but it is not marked for tone.
The dictionary consists of about 2,170 words by my estimation, the main entries listed as CPE to English. Only the English etyma are given, but some, like the one for *afro* ‘a hair style’, certainly not of indigenous origin, are missing. Despite the dictionary’s limitations, which are considerable, we can appreciate it for giving us an insight into the size of CPE’s lexical inventory.

**References**


