Empowering peripheral writing: A case of South African Black English (SABE)

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Abstract

Go Matlaafatsa go Kwala ga ba ba Ikgatholosiwang: Ntlha ya Seesimane sa Bantsho ba Aforika Borwa (SBAB)

Tshobokanyo: Melebo ya molebopopego le molebotlhaeletsano e na le go leba boitshwaro jwa tekatenano le maitsholo a setemokerasi ka mokgwa o o fosagetseng fa go tlhalosiwa Seesimane sa Bantsho ba Aforika Borwa (SBAB). Fa mo letlhakoreng le lengwe ba amogela gore ditumalano tsa dikwalo di a farologana mo merafeng ka go farologana ga yona, melebo e, fa gongwe ga e netefatse gore ditumalano tsa dikwalo di fitlhelega ka go lekana mo bakwading botlhe le go nna le mosola o o lekanang. Ka mafoko a mangwe, le fa ba amogela dipharologano tse, melebo e ya popego le tlhaeletsano ga se gantsi e lekalekanya dipharologano le dikamano tse di sa lekalekaneng tsa dithata. Ka ntlha ya se, gantsi e ikgatholosa go tlhoka maatlafatso le go ikamologanya le baithuti ba dikwalo tsa bona di ikgatholosiwang le go sa tsewe tsia. Patlisiso e, e dirisa molebo wa patlisiso ya mekgwamentsi ya thuto ya saense ya merafe e e farologaneng ka go sekaseka ditlhamo di le 82 tsa baithuti ba ngwaga wa ntlha wa molao ba ba ithutang khoso ya kgopololo ya go kwala ka mokgwa wa seakatemi. Patlisiso e e amogela ponalo ya morago ga molebopopego mme e sekaseka dikwalo e seng fela jaaka dilo tse di thata tsa puo le ditiro tsa molomo kgotsa tse e seng tsa molomo mme e lemoga le khuetso ya ditiro tse di tlholang go nna teng ga botho le go ntsifala ga merafe gore e tle e tlamele merafe e e feeketsang e mengwe ka ditshwanelo tsa dikgatlhegelo tsa bona. Ka jalo, dikwalo ga di tsewe jaaka tse di sa tseyeng letlhakore ka gonne di na le bokao jwa setso le jwa ditumelo e bile di rotloetsa ka moo batho ba iponang le go bona seabe sa bona ka teng mo setšhabeng. Le fa ba amogela gore baithuti ba ba ikgatholosiwang ba tshwanelwa ke go tlhokomela melawana ya thutapuo le go tlhaeletsana ka tshwanelo, pampiri e, e botsa dipotso tsa mofuta oo, tse di jaaka tse: Melawana e, e tlhokomela dikgatlhegelo tsa ga mang? A go na le setlhopha sengwe sa melawana se se ka atolosang dikgonagalo tsa moithuti? E

tswelela gape go tlhotlhomisa potso ya gore a mme phatloso e e dirisang SBAB jaaka sediriswa le ntlha ya go fitlhelela Seesimane sa maemo a a kannweng, e ka amogelwa. Le fa phatloso e e ntseng jalo e lemoga tlhokego ya baithuti ba ba ikgatholosiwang gore ba fitlhelele Seesimane sa maemo a a kwannweng ka gonne fa ba sa dire jalo, ba tla tswelela go ikganela mo dilong, phatloso e, e netefatsa gore setaele sa baithuti ba, se se tshwanang se le nosi, boitshupo jwa bona, le dingwao tsa bona di somarelwe. Phatloso e e ntseng jalo e ka se maatlafatse baithuti ba ba ikgatholosiwang fela e tla ba maatlafatsa ka mokgwa o ba iponang ka ona le seabe sa bona mo setšhabeng.

Introduction

A few questions have been raised regarding the definition of a variety of English which Lanham[1] terms South African Black English (SABE), sometimes also called Black South African English (BSAE). [2] One of these questions is who exactly the speaker of SABE is, given that there are nine indigenous African languages in South Africa. The assumption here is that since there are various indigenous South African languages, SABE will be influenced by the speaker's/writer's mother tongue. Another question is that since some of the features of SABE are comparable to any English second language (ESL) speaker's interlanguage, how does one differentiate SABE from interlanguage. The level of SABE speakers' competency in English may range from the basilect to the native-speaker-like level. Defining SABE gets even more intricate if one considers that since South Africa is currently promoting multilingualism, and sometimes dialectism, code-switching and code mixing, how would one define it, then. I use De Klerk's[3] definition of SABE in the current study, namely, that SABE is:

…the variety of English commonly used by mother-tongue speakers of South Africa's indigenous African languages in areas where English is not the language of the majority.

SABE has emerged mainly due to the poor learning and teaching its speakers have received, their group enclosure and cohesiveness, their cultural lifestyle, and politics .[4] The present study regards a SABE speaker as any fluent

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1   LM Lanham, "Stress and intonation and the intelligibility of South African Black English", *African Studies*, 43(2), 1984, pp. 217-229.
2   LW Wright, "The standardisation question in Black South African English", V de Klerk, *Focus on South Africa* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1996), pp.149-162.
3   V de Klerk, "Towards a corpus of Black South African English", *Southern African linguistics and applied language studies*, 20(1-2), 2002, pp. 25-35.
4   Q Buthelezi, "South African black English: lexical and syntactic characteristics", R Mesthrie *Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics* (Cape Town, David Philips, 1995), pp. 242-250.

ESL speaker/writer who is at the higher education level or whose English competency is at least comparable to such a speaker/writer's. The article does not concern itself about how fluency is measured and it is based on written rather than spoken English.

The present study has been prompted by the observation that structuralist and communicative approaches describing South African Black English (SABE) tend to wrongly assume egalitarian and democratic attitudes towards discourse communities. While they accept that discourse conventions are different in different communities, these approaches often take it for granted that discourse conventions are equally accessible to all writers and possess equal values. In other words, although they acknowledge differences, structuralist and communicative approaches seldom equate differences with unequal power relations. Because of this, they normally disregard the disempowerment and alienation that students who use peripheral writing encounter, thus privileging those who use centre writing.

Explaining the terms "periphery" writing and "centre" writing, Canagaragh says that "periphery" writing refers to communities of the former British colonies where English is used as a dominant post-colonial language e.g. Zambia, India, and Barbados. Also included in this category are speech communities which were once colonial imperial powers such as Belgium, France, and Spain but have now come under the neo-imperialist influence of English-speaking centre communities. These are, among others, Vietnam, Tunisia, Mexico, and Indonesia. "Centre" writing, on the other hand, refers to "the technologically advanced communities of the West which, at least in part, sustain their material dominance by keeping less developed communities in periphery status".[5] Typically, among the centre groups is the presence of the native English communities i.e. North-America, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

The study adopts a poststructural perspective and approaches discourse as complexes of verbal and non-verbal language and practices that construct social existence and social reproduction in order to privilege the interests of the dominant society segment/s. Therefore discourses are regarded as not neutral as they have cultural and ideological implications and they influence the way people perceive themselves and their role in society. In

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5 AS Canagarajah, *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 4.

sociolinguistics, discourse refers, broadly speaking, to "ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practices".[6] Gee[7] defines discourses as "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles (or 'types of people') by specific groups of people…". While acknowledging that it is important for periphery learners to observe the rules of grammar and of communicating appropriately, the article raises questions such as: Whose interests do such rules serve? Are there any other sets of rules that can expand learners' possibilities? It then explores the question of whether a different pedagogy, using SABE as a resource and a means to access standard English, could be adopted[8] because if peripheral students do not acquire it (standard English), they will perpetuate their own marginalization and deprive themselves of the enriching interaction with multicultural communities and traditions they would otherwise have. Such a pedagogy should, however, ensure that these learners retain their unique style, identity, and values. In this way, periphery learners are not only empowered materially but in the way they perceive themselves and their roles in society. Another significance of this study is that insights gained from it could supplement other studies on black Englishes[9] like those found in Anglo-phone Africa,[10] the Caribbean,[11] the United States of America,[12] and Britain.[13]

An historical overview

  Since South African Black English has existed in the history of a particular ideology, ideas about the state and society, economic dynamics, language planning and policies, it is important to consider how different governments in the history of South Africa have in terms of these factors affected the

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6   R Mesthrie, R Swann, J Deumert, & WL Leap, *Introducing sociolinguistics* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 323.

7   J Gee, *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourse* (Basingstoke, Falmer Press, 1990), p. xix.

8   P Nightingale, "Language and learning: a biographical essay", G Taylor, B Ballad, V Beasley, H Bock, J Clanchy & P Nightingale, *Literacy in degrees* (Philadelphia, The Society for Research into Higher Education, 1988), p. 279.

10   Q Buthelezi, "South African black English: Lexical and syntactic characteristics", R Mesthrie, *Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics*, p. 242.

10   EG Bokamba, "The Africanisation of English", BB Kachru, *The other tongues: English across cultures* (Ilinois, University of Illinois Press, 1982), pp. 125-147.

11   MC Alleyne, *Comparative Afro-American* (Ann Arbor, Karoma, 1980), p. 15.

12   I Ibrahim, "'Whassup, homeboy?' Joining the African diaspora: Black English as a symbolic site of identification and language learning", S Makoni, G Smitherman, AF Ball, & A Spears *Black linguistics* (Routledge, London and New York, 2003), pp. 169-183.

13   D Sutcliff, *British black English* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1972).

acquisition of SABE. To trace the history of this variety, I use Lanham's[14] categorization of the history of English in South Africa i.e. the colonial era, the era of the new society, the post-war era, and the era of the new South Africa.

The Colonial era

Lanham[15] points out that "The pattern and tradition of African (black) English in the colonial era was set in the great mission institutions, first in the Cape Colony and later in Natal". Native learners in the senior grades were taught through the medium of English. Their English competency is said to have been high because they could interact with English learners in mission schools, and well-educated English men and women. Numbers were also small. Branford[16] notes that "Some senior members of the earlier ANC leadership experienced education of this kind". Although the English settlers were fewer than the Dutch and were transient, they wielded more power in law, education, and the press. Deliberate moves were taken to Anglicise the Cape and the governor, Lord Charles Somerset made English the only official language in 1822 and recruited British schoolmasters and persons to fill vacancies in churches and schools.[17] Hartshorne[18] observes:

> It is stating the obvious to say that English-medium education can be effective only if both teachers and pupils have the capacity to use English at a level appropriate to the learning required in the classroom, and also have textbooks and other materials written at a level that takes this factor into account.

The era of the new society

The Era of the New Society began in the 1870s when settlers started to pursue wealth after the discovery of minerals, especially gold in the Witwatersrand and diamonds in Kimberley.[19] A huge number of immigrants from Britain, Eastern and Western Europe came to live in the new mining towns. English

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14 LW Lanham, "A history of English in South Africa", V de Klerk, *Focus on South Africa*, pp. 19-34.
15 W Branford, "English in South African Society: A preliminary overview", V de Klerk, *Focus…*, pp. 35-53.
16 LW Lanham, "A history of English… ", V de Klerk, *Focus…*, p. 20.
17 K Hartshorne, "Language policy in African education: A background to the future", R Mesthrie, Language and Social History", *Studies in South African sociolinguistics* (David Philip, Cape Town & Johannesburg, 1995), p. 314.
18 LW Lanham, "A history of English… ", V de Klerk, *Focus…*, p. 23.
19 LW Lanham, "A history of English… ", V de Klerk, *Focus…*, pp. 23-24.

was the dominant language in these places and this continued right into the twentieth century. Lanham[20] remarks that "The significance of English in the mining-industrial society was the extent to which varieties of English reflected social values and social structure. The denigration of the obviously local and the ascription of quality and excellence to things British made Standard Southern BrE the mark of high social status and an entry qualification to higher social ranking and the power group in the mining society". The South African Broadcasting Corporation was forced to uphold standard British English. Dutch was still marginalisation and the speakers of this language were, because of this, hostile towards English. In 1925 Afrikaans replaced Dutch as the other official language of South Africa. This move marked the beginning of the promotion of bilingualism in English and Afrikaans in the public sector. However, English remained dominant and the British continued wielding economic power. The Afrikaners initiated and promoted Afrikaner nationalism as a tool for opposing English domination. During the Era of the New Society, the number of English-speaking black people was gradually rising. This was made possible by the continual growth of urbanization, which created jobs for them and brought them into contact with English speakers, and the provision of more state and mission schools where learners were taught mostly in English. "African English", Lanham says, "was becoming recognised, particularly in educational circles, as having a uniform core of norms, particularly in pronunciation, which characterised this variety of English".

The "Post-War era"

In their promotion of Afrikaner nationalism, the Afrikaners had aligned themselves with Nazi Germany at the outbreak of the World War 2. In 1948 the Afrikaner Nationalist Party came into power with a strong determination to correct the subjugation they had endured under the English rule. Soon after this, steps of enforcing Afrikaans were mounted. Education was used as one of the tools for promoting Afrikaans and minimizing the role of English. This move was applied more rigorously in black education. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 put the control of black education under the Afrikaners and substituted English as a medium of instruction with black mother tongues at black primary schools level (first eight years) but the lexis of these native

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20   LW Lanham, "A history of English…, " V de Klerk, *Focus*…, pp. 25-27.

languages had not been developed to meet the needs of the industrializing colony. At the secondary school, both Afrikaans and English were to be used as languages of learning and teaching. Apartheid laws like the Population Registration Act of 1950 segregated people of different races from one another and, as a sequel to this, forced removals were effected. White teachers were forbidden to teach at state-run black schools and mission schools and black students were denied access to white colleges and universities. To show their indignation, about the introduction of Bantu Education, many good black teachers went to self-exile. One of the results of all this was that black learners' exposure to good models of English was virtually eliminated, and thinking along racial lines was entrenched in people's minds. Teachers who trained through Bantu Education graduated with poor teaching methods and English competence from the colleges which had been affected the same way black schools had been. Lanham[21] points out that:

> Inquiries and investigations by outsiders into Bantu Education institutions were not encouraged but it soon became clear that English lessons were being conducted almost entirely in the mother tongue and unrelieved rote-learning was the main strategy of learning.

In 1974 the Department of Bantu Education stepped up its authoritarian actions to impose the use of Afrikaans as the language of learning and teaching for one or more participants from grade seven to grade twelve. Teachers and learners did not know Afrikaans well enough to use it as a language of learning and teaching. Protest against this measure culminated in the 1976 Soweto schools' rebellion. In the public sector, the National Party government entrenched Nationalist bilingualism, giving rewards for those who could speak English and Afrikaans and punishing those who could not. One of the consequences of this is that black English deviated more and more from the standard English. Hartshorne[22] points out that:

> It was not the educational interests of the pupil (e.g. that they had to study three languages throughout their school career, and use two foreign medium at the same time in the secondary school) that were regarded as paramount. These were made subservient to ideological and political factor that were concerned with the protection of white interests and in particular the maintenance of Afrikaner Nationalist domination in the fields of politics and education.

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21 LW Lanham, "A history of English", V de Klerk, *Focus…*, pp. 25-27.
22 K Hartshorne, *Language policy in African education: A background to the future*, R Mesthrie, *Language and history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics*, pp. 306-318.

To stem the tide of this decline, some concerned English speakers established non-governmental initiatives such as the Molteno Project aimed at the development of language and literacy in black primary schools. (The project celebrated its 30th anniversary in October 1975).[23] Its Breakthrough to Literacy course is said to have become "the best mean of teaching initial reading and writing skills"[24] in the vernacular in South Africa. After finishing Breakthrough to Literacy, the learner reads Bridge to English, a programme that enables the learner to acquire the same skills of the first course in English. The third component of the Project is the consolidation series: Bridge Plus One is designed for grade 3 and 4; Bridge Plus Two is currently being piloted. Also, adult basic education versions of Breakthrough to Literacy and Bridge to English have been produced. After completing the former, the adult learner's competency in the mother tongue is comparable to that of a grade 7 learner and the latter takes the adult learner to a grade 5 English competency level.[25] To date the number of teachers who have been trained by the Molteno Project is estimated at 20 000.[26]

The "New South Africa era", 1990 to the present

The unbanning of the resistance organizations and the release of Mandela in 1990 signaled the beginning of the end of the Afrikaner government in South African. In 1994 the current democratic government took control over English in education and state-run media (radio and television broadcasting) and institutions from the hands of the Nationalist Party and put it into the hands of the black majority. While providing for the practical step for the elevation of the status and promotion of indigenous language,[27] the new rule has proffered, among other things, official status to all these languages as well as English and Afrikaans because they are used by approximately 98% of

23 V Rodseth, "25 Years of applied linguistics in Southern Africa: Themes and trends in Southern African linguistics", B Lepota & J Geldenhuys, *Proceedings of the joint conference of the Southern African Applied Linguistics Association and Linguistics Society of Southern Africa*, 2005, pp. 306-318.

24 "History of Molteno" (available at http://www.ru.ac.za/affiliates/molteno, as researched on 8 Oct. 2007), pp. 1-2.

25 "The Molteno Project: Adult basic education" (available at http://www.ru.ac.za/affiliates/molteno/, as researched on 8 Oct. 2007) pp. 1-2.

26 "History of Molteno" (available at http://www.ru.ac.za/affiliates/molteno, as researched on 8 Oct. 2007), pp. 1-2.

27 Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 lists the following as the indigenous languages of the country: isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, siSwati, sePedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga.

the total citizenry. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP)[28] gives people the freedom to choose which languages to use at school and advocates for the use of multilingualism as an extension of cultural diversity and a vital part of creating non-racial South Africa, fostering of mother education, use of an additional language or languages (additive bilingualism), and code-switching to facilitate learning and teaching. The Pan South African Language Board and Centres for Research and Language Development have been established to promote the use and development of all the official language of the country, particularly the indigenous languages. In practice the role of Afrikaans, and to a lesser extent of English, is being reduced. Afrikaans is no longer a compulsory subject or a compulsory medium of instruction. While English is still the medium of instruction from grade 3 in African schools, attempts are being made to make the vernacular the language of tuition from grade one to university. This, however, does not mean that there should be laxity in teaching English. Since English is a language of wider communication, learners are expected to be as competent in it as possible.

Fruitful innovations are being made to promote, as the Department of Education encourages, the utilisation of code-switching and multilingualism in the classroom. For example, experimenting with the use of Sepedi and English in an integrated English course, which "not only develop students into bilingual specialists but also allows the use of who language to be resources for each other" has been successfully carried out.[29] The course emphasizes the use of basic interpersonal communicative (BIC) skills, which are context embedded and undervalued by lecturers, as a means for accessing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) skills, which are context-reduced and liked by lecturers (cf. my intention of using SABE as a means to access standard English).

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28 Department of Education, "Language in Education Policy", 14 July 1997 (available at www.education.gov. za/?src=docuandxsrc=poli, as researched on 8 Oct. 2007), pp. 1-4.

29 National Language Policy Framework National Language Services, Department of Arts and Culture, 12 February 2003, p. 6; E Ramani, T Kekana, M Modiba & M Joseph, "Terminology development versus concept development through discourse: Insights from a dual-medium BA degree", *Southern African Linguistic and Applied Language Studies*, 25(2), 2007, pp. 207-223.

Learning and problematising ESL

Several reasons make the moral obligation to improve ESL learners' writing skills imperative. Orr[30] writes:

> The argument throughout current literature on student writing is that admission into the academic discourse community is a prerequisite for successful study. Mastering a discipline at tertiary level is as much a matter of acquiring the language of the academic community as it is of learning the content.

Failure to help ESL students improve their writing skills tips the power scales against these students and gives L1 students, who have already acquired academic discourse at school and/or at home, an advantage. This hegemony results in the end in linguatocracy, i.e.:

> a minority group who are in charge of the code that one needs to access influential positions of power, decision-making, and leadership.[31]

Instead of being empowered by writing, many ESL learners are often overwhelmed by their awareness of their inability to write the way their teachers want them to. Mitchell and Taylor[32] observe that:

> teachers do not recognize and therefore condemn styles of thinking which are not the dominant academic style. Concentrating on certain unchanging features of the written product tempts teachers to assume that the student's mental development is somehow retarded...

While Zamel[33] has found out that ESL competent learners are as good as competent L1 learners and Raimes'[34] study has indicated that incompetent ESL learners' writing is comparable to incompetent L1 learners', it would seem that incompetent ESL writers outnumber their L1 counterparts by far. Frankenberg-Garcia notes that ESL learners appear to be more disadvantaged because of lack of mastery of the English vocabulary and grammar. This observation is supported by Widdowson[35], who says that lack of automation of the lexis and syntax of English causes ESL learners' mind to be so engrossed

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30 MH Orr, "Teaching writing at university: an academic literacy programme", *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 29 (2), 1995, pp. 189-196.
31 C Pendley, "Language policy and social transformation in contemporary Singapore", *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 11 (2), 1983, pp. 46-58.pp. 1-4.
32 R Mitchel & M Taylor, "The integrating perspective", *College English*, 41(3), 1979, pp. 247-271.
33 V Zamel, "Writing: the process of discovering meaning", *TESOL Quarterly*, 16, (2), 1982, pp. 195-209.
34 A Raimes, "What unskilled ESL students do as they write: A classroom study of composing", *TESOL Quarterly*, 19 (2), 1985, pp. 229-258.
35 H Widdowson, *Teaching language as communication* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 15.

in attaining morphological and grammatical correctness that they neglect paying attention to the creation of meaning.

The literature on SABE has examined this variety mostly from the viewpoint of structuralism. Mawasha[36] is based on designing grammar books for various levels of secondary school ESL learners. Magura[37] is mainly sociolinguistics. Finn[38] looks at the how mother tongue interference causes aberrant sentences in ESL writing. Wildsmith[39] focuses on how teachers' incompetence can induce ESL learners' mistakes. Buthelezi[40] is syntactical. Gough[41] considers a number of issues including the phonology of SABE, grammar, vocabulary, discourse patterns and code switching. Mesthrie[42] is socio-structural. Van der Walt and Van Rooy[43] are grammatical and Makalela[44] is socio-structural.

One of the perennial questions raised when varieties depart from the standard norm is how far this departure should be tolerated. It is a truism that for a language variety to be regarded as English, it has to bear the basic syntactic structure of standard English. Occasional differences may occur in terms of vocabulary but the syntax should be mostly similar to that of English for mutual intelligibility between speakers of these varieties to occur. A case in point is the differences between British, American, Australian, New Zealand, and White South African English. While SABE conforms to a large degree to these varieties, it now and then evinces its own marked characteristics, which require more effort from one to understand it. Peripheral students should, as Canagarajah points out:

> show how written English can be used with varying degrees of indigenization to ensure intelligibility with the pan-English readership, while not sacrificing local values and conventions.

36 A Mawasha, "The teaching of English as a second language to North Sotho speaking children – The junior secondary school with special reference to oral communication" (Ph.D UNIN, 1977).

37 B Magura, "Styles and meaning in African English: a sociolinguistic analysis of South African and Zimbawean English" (Ph.D, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1984).

38 S Finn, "The abuse of English students at Vista", *English usage in South Africa*, 17 (1), 1986, pp. 1-8.

39 R Wildsmith, "Teachers' attitudes and practices: A correlational study" (Ph.D, University of London, 1992).

40 Q Buthelezi, "South African Black English…", R Mesthrie *Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics*, pp. 242-250.

41   G Gough, "Black English in South Africa", V de Klerk, *Focus on South Africa* (Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 1996), pp. 53-77.

42 R Mesthrie, "A sociolinguistic study of topicalisation phenomena in South African Black English", WE Schneider, *English around the world 2* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1997), pp. 119-140.

43 JL van der Walt and B van Rooy, "Towards a norm in South African Englishes", *World Englishes*, 21 (1), 2002, pp. 113-128.

44 L Makalela, "Making sense of BSAE for linguistic democracy in South Africa", *World Englishes*, 23(3), 2004, pp. 355-366.

He adds that:

> They will reposition themselves in English language and discourse to use these not as slaves, but as agents; to use English not mechanically and diffidently, but creatively and critically".[45]

Since the advent of the new democracy in South Africa in 1994, the acquisitional context of SABE has changed in favour of the growth its prestige. De Klerk and Gough[46] observe that:

> The stigma associated with the use of non-standard varieties, so strong in the past, has been replaced by a growing assertiveness and confidence in the value of SAE varieties, including BSAE.

Norton-Peirce (1990:408) also notes that SABE is "…a struggle to appropriate English in the interest of democracy in South Africa". One of the factors that have contributed to the prestige of SABE is the growing socio-economic status of SABE speakers, many of whom are now forming a black middle class. Talking about prestige brings us to the question of standard English, which is discussed below.

Standard English

SABE has passed the first of the three developmental phases through which a new English evolves before it is standardized. The first and the third phase are the extreme ends of the spectrum: the first, the exonormative phase, takes place during a colony's pre-independence period when the standard variety is derived from the colonizers. The third occurs when a new English is standardized like when American English was. The second phase is the liberation and expansion phase, which happens when what is the standard variety begins to be informed by the indiginized variety of the colonial language. However, this era is, according to Gill,[47] characterized by a great deal of instability. Stability emerges only in the endonormative phase when a constant norm is accepted on the grounds of the practical needs of the language users. Webb[48] rightly observes that aiming for the attainment of British English is unrealistic in an

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45 AS Canagarajah, *Resisting linguistics imperialism in English teaching*, p. 179.
46 V De Klerk V & D Gough, "Black South African English" R, Mesthrie, *Language in South Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 356-378.
47 SK Gill, "Standardisation and emerging linguistic realities in the Malaysian workplace", *World Englishes*, 18 (2), 1999, pp. 215-232.
48 V Webb, "English and language planning in South Africa: the flip-side", V de Klerk, *Focus on South Africa*, (Amsterdam, Benjamins, 1996), pp. 175-199.

ESL environment and further notes that the question of setting a norm is not only a pedagogic issue but, it is fundamentally an economic and a political one. American English established its independent norm through economic and political strength.

Quoting Sridhar and Sridhar on the new meaning some new Englishes have given to Selinker's concept of fossilization, Van der Walt and Van Rooy[49] write:

> Second language/interlanguage stops short of the ultimate refinement, ...Rules fossilize – approximate forms appear to function more or less adequately – but remain deviant from the perspective of the native English user …These forms become stable and 'normal', and within the new English paradigm, can no longer be regarded as fossilization.

This is not what is meant by "new English" in the current study. What the concept means here is the students' capacity to learn beyond their interlanguage level and be so competent in standard English that they can deliberately evince now and then their identity through the ways they express themselves. For the same reason, I would not use Mesthrie's[50] term "acrolect" here, because that would suggest a deficit model of SABE.

Warning against the tendency to treat Ebonics (read SABE) as if it is not a variety in its own right, Wolfram[51] argues that:

> Characterization of Ebonics as 'slang', 'mutant', 'lazy', 'defective', 'ungrammatical', or broken English' is incorrect and demeaning.

He then adds that it is, just like SABE is, rule-governed and systematic like all linguistic systems – spoken, signed, and written.

Canagarajah's[52] position captures the new Englishes envisioned in the current study when he says that:

> while we must recognize the contextual appropriacy of different Englishes …it is equally important to teach students that any dialect has to be personally and communally appropriated to varying degrees in order to be meaningful and relevant for its users. This would lead to the pluralisation of standards and democratisation of access to English.

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49 V Webb, "English and language planning…", V de Klerk, *Focus*…., p. 116.
50 R Mesthrie, "South African Indian English: from L2 to L1", R Mesthrie, *Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics* (Cape Town & Johannesburg, David Philip, 1995), pp. 251-264.
51 W Wolfram, "Ebonics and linguistic science: Clarifying issues in CAL Center for Applied Linguistics", (available at <http:www:cal.org/ebonics/wolfram.html> as researched on 9 March 2007), pp. 1-5.
52 AS Canagarajah, *Resisting linguistics imperialism in English teaching*, p. 181.

As for loss of international intelligibility, Bamgbose[53] contends that mutual intelligibility should be a two-way act; a mutual process of unlearning and re-learning by both the native speakers and the L2 speakers of English. The purpose of the current study is to explore how the participants' SABE, instead of being regarded as some disease that requires eliminating, could be utilized as resource in order to facilitate learners' acquisition of standard English, while at the same time retaining the uniqueness of this variety as some accomplished writers in new Englishes have done.

Methodology

The present study is mainly qualitative and uses data triangulation. This study involves the analyses of first-year students' essays, their syllabuses and examination papers, debriefings, semi-structured interviews with the participants' law lecturers and my own participant observation as a SABE speaker. The essays were used to provide a corpus from which the characteristics of the participants' SABE were drawn. These were then compared with the writing proficiency law lecturer's expected the participants to have. The participants' syllabuses, past examination papers, debriefings, and my own observations provided a means for cross-checking the participants' language needs. The use of multiple methods reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the identified problem. The article is premised on the assumption that "objective reality", in the words of Danzil and Lincoln,[54] "can, never be captured nor fully apprehended; it can only be approximated".

The study operates outside the positivist or science framework. Working within the positivist or science paradigm, quantitative researchers assume, according to Danzil and Lincoln[55] that:

> …there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood… They are deliberately unconcerned with rich descriptions because such detail interrupts the process of developing generalizations. In the science paradigm, people are often lumped together in some undefinable aggregate as if they were

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53 A Bamgbose "Torn between the norms: innovations in world Englishes", *World Englishes*, 17(1), 1998, pp. 1-14.

54 NK Danzil & YS Lincoln, "Introduction: The discipline and practice of quantitative research", NK Danzil and YS Lincoln, *Handbook of quantitative research*, second edition (Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2000), pp. 1-28.

55 NK Danzil & YS Lincoln, "Introduction: The discipline and practice…", NK Danzil & YS Lincoln, *Handbook of quantitative research*, p. 9. NK Danzil & YS Lincoln, "Introduction: The discipline and practice…", NK Danzil & YS Lincoln, *Handbook of quantitative research*, pp. 3-4.

> not individual groups or persons. Positivists argue that what they do is good
> science, free of individual bias and subjectivity.   ….they see constructivism,
> poststructuralism, and postmodernism as attacks on reason and truth.

In keeping with the constructivist, poststructural, or postmodern schools of thought, the present study rejects the positivist criteria of evaluation. It regards these criteria as a means of reproducing only a certain kind of science, a science that silences too many voices. The quantitative research approach deploys a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the phenomenon in question. It postulates that any view of reality is always influenced by the viewer's language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. Danzil and Lincoln[56] maintain that:

> No single method can grasp all of the subtle variations in ongoing human experience.

The participants wrote a two-hour essay on the merger of the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PUCHE), a historically Afrikaner university with The University of North-West, a historically black Bantustan university, into one institution i.e. North West University. The essay were written towards the end of a one-year remedial English course which had lasted a year and in which students were taught reading and writing. The essays were written under examination conditions and independently evaluated by three assessors (including the teacher of the course) who, using Fairclough's[57] and Norton's[58] analytical framework, each selected six (essays) that showed the most features of SABE. Later the assessors discussed the eighteen essays they had selected and further selected, by mutual agreement, only two that had the most features of SABE. Before the participants wrote the essays, they were given Gough's[59] article on South African Black English and another one by Janks and Ivanic[60] on critical language awareness so that they could write from an informed position.

56 NK Danzil & YS Lincoln, "Introduction: The discipline and practice…", NK Danzil & YS Lincoln, *Handbook of quantitative research*, p. 9.

57 N Fairclough, "The discourse of new labor: Critical discourse analysis", M Wetherell, S Taylor, & S Yates, Discourse as data (Milton Keynes, The Open University, 2001), pp. 236-239.

58 B Norton. *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity, and educational change* (Harlow, Longman, 2000), pp. 21-22.

59 G Gough, "Black English in South Africa", V de Klerk (Ed.) *Focus* …, pp. 53-77.

60 H Janks & R Ivanic, "CLA and emancipatory discourse", N Fairclough, *Critical language awareness*, (Singapore, Longman, 1992), pp. 305-331.

The participants

The participants were 82 first-year, resident students, mostly (about 97% of them) Setswana speaking, who were registered for an LLB programme at a historically disadvantaged rural university in the North-West area of Mafikeng. They were taking a remedial English course called English and Academic Skills (EAS) in their first academic year at University. The majority of them were underprepared students who came from the former Apartheid government schools, most of which are still severely under-resourced. Although English had been the language of learning and teaching (LOT) from grade five in these schools, many of the teachers in these schools were not competent enough to teach in English and it was often the vernacular language that was being used.[61] Also, when the changeover from using the vernacular to English occurred, many learners had not acquired the requisite literacy that a learner in an adequately resourced school had attained.[62] When they reach university, many of these students' language deficiencies have changed very little. Kilfoil and Van der Walt[63] remark that an additional disadvantage that rural students like the target group of the current study face is that they have very little exposure to English outside of the classroom. Consequently, they are inadequately prepared to study successfully at universities where English is the language of learning and teaching.

Findings and discussion

The study revealed a number of findings. The participants' mainstream lecturers normally regarded assisting students in their language difficulties as falling outside of their duties. Theirs was, they argued, only to teach content and many of them heavily penalise students for language weaknesses shown in written work. The study seeks to persuade these lectures to view SABE peripheral writing in a positive light and use it as a stepping-stone to acquiring standard English.

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61 K Amuzu, "The role of English in educating the new South Africa", *English usage in South Africa* 23, 1992, pp. 129-138.
62 C Macdonald, "Crossing the threshold into standard three", *Report, Soling* 16 (Pretoria, Human and Social Science Research Council, 1990), p. 15.
63 W Kilfoil & C van der Walt, *Learn 2 teach: English language teaching in a multicultural context*, 3rd edition, (Pretoria, Van Schaik, 1997), p. 73.

The participants' essays were expected to meet the following requirements:

- Covering of sufficient content: inclusion of as much relevant information as possible, exclusion of irrelevant information, avoidance of unnecessary repetitions.

- Use of the appropriate form:

- use of mainly everyday vocabulary, simple lucid sentences, and coherent paragraphs patterned on giving a topic sentence and supporting details;

- judicial use of cohesive devices, avoidance of vagueness, and inaccuracies;

- efficient use of grammar, spelling and punctuation and

- competent use of the impersonal, tentative, and formal style of the academia.

- Demonstration of insight, and an ability to see relationships and solve problems and

These competencies could be condensed into three items: good content, good insight and appropriate form.

Some features of SABE in the participants' essays

Most of the research on SABE has mainly been based on the lexical, syntactic and pragmatic differences between this variety and standard English. I examine SABE from the point of view of critical linguistics using Text A and B below as illustrations of the texts that had the most SABE features. I use the following as some of the most salient SABE features: Florid language, indirectness, multiple identity and multiple resources, high level of formality, oral narrative, unnecessary repetition and padding, and localised lexis. While some of these features are my own observation, others are extracted mainly from Buthelezi,[64] Gough,[65] Norton,[66] and Spacks.[67]

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64   Q Buthelezi, "South African black English…", R Mesthrie *Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics*, p. 242.
65   G Gough, "Black English…", V de Klerk, *Focus…*" pp. 53-78.
66   NB Norton, *Identity and language learning…*, pp. 1-16.
68   R, Spacks, & JG Carson, "Cultural background: what should we know about multilingual students?", *TESOL Quarterly* 32(4), 1998, pp. 735-740.

Text A

Florid language

One of the most prominent features of Text A is the use of florid language. An analogy about the mating of a donkey and a horse and the resultant mule has been used to begin the essay. Metaphors abound throughout the writer's argument (e.g. "orphans", "light and future", "smoothly", "Msholozi's", and "pursuing") and two idioms – "be on each other's throats," and "those whose blankets are short" (translated from Setswana *ba ba dikobo dikhutswana*) – appear in the second and last paragraph. This practice probably results from the misleading past teaching, which has taught the target group that good English is only highfalutin English with figurative language. What might have also reinforced this notion is that since education in South Africa has been so Western oriented it has, because of this, been so ethereal to many South African learners, who tend therefore to talk about their subject matter in a language too formal and removed from everyday communication. While they can observe various levels of formality in their discourse as when they converse formally with a chief or less informally when they converse with their neighbours, and highly informally (using swear words now and then, for example) when they talk with the people to whom they are very close, the participants tend to fail to transfer their awareness of this cline of formality to their writing. They then take an extreme position of being either too formal or too informal. Gough[68] notes incongruent levels of formality between standard English and SABE and says the following of the latter:

> words like *abode* and *mommy* may, for instance, respectively be used in informal and formal contexts not typical of native-speaker usage.

Although the language of law is, as Smuts[69] points out, characteristically literal and seldom uses metaphors, symbolism, idioms and proverbs much, it is fraught with technical jargon and this probably contributes to the participant's tendency to use florid language.

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68 G Gough, "Black English…", V de Klerk, *Focus…*" p. 64.
69 J Smuts, "The design and effectiveness of the course English for LLB students at the University of Free State" (Paper, AUETSA annual conference, University of Free State, 2001).

Indirectness

The first paragraph of Text A is very indirect. The first sentence uses an analogy and does not mention the names of the two universities being talked about. In the second sentence the writer says "…I have some opinions regarding the merger" instead of directly stating those opinions. Canagarajah[70] points out that Tamil discourse values the digression and indirection typical of predominantly oral, rural communities. This discourse pattern indicates that since in these communities the phatic function of communication is often regarded as more important than the transactional one, speakers/writers start off by expressing the phatic function of conversation before expressing the transactional one. In other words, speakers/writers should establish the *ubuntu/botho* or interpersonal relations with their interlocutors before they talk business. *Ubuntu/botho* is an African value by which it is believed that a person's humanity can only be complete when it has been supplemented by others'.

Another aspect of *ubuntu/botho* as expressed through indirectness is politeness. According to Lakoff,[71] one of the maxims of the politeness principle is that people should not impose. Indirectness is one of the means of avoiding imposition. While this maxim might be a universal principle, in African communities it appears to be valued more than it is done in Anglo-Saxon communities. Indirectness in SABE speakers' culture can also be expressed non-verbally as well as when a person uses two hands instead of one when giving out something to somebody no matter how small the object may be. It would seem that indirectness is not in keeping with legal discourse. Crystal[72] remarks that "legal language …shares with (the language) of science a concern for coherence and precision" largely because so much could go wrong if these elements are missing in dealing with cases but coherence and precision as used in academia fly in the face of SABE speakers' discourse pattern.

Multiple identity and multiple resources

Many expressions in Text A do not make much sense unless they are read from the viewpoint of an English second language (ESL) student's background

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70 AS Canagarajah, *Resisting linguistics imperialism* …, p. 87.
71 R, Lakoff, "The logic of politeness: minding your p's and q's'". Paper presented at 9th Regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society in 1973, pp. 292-305.
72 D Crystal, The Encyclopedia of the English language (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 374.

of multiple identity and multiple resources suggested in the essay. In the second paragraph, the writer draws some of his/her expressions from his/her first language, Setswana. The phrase "a university of orphans" is derived from the Setswana phrase, *yunibesithi ya di khutsana*, and the expression "if it is real that the merger will happen" and "I am afraid" are direct translations of Setswana *ga e le nnete gore kopantso e tla diragala and ke a boifa*, respectively. In the first phrase, the writer wanted to say that Uniwest was established in order to meet the poor's educational needs but he/she muddled this idea by using the metaphor "orphans". In the second, he/she wanted to say that "if the merger happens" but mainly because the English verb, unlike the Setswana one, cannot be inflected to show a future time, the learner has come up with an English phrase patterned on the Setswana future marker i.e. tla. The writer's third unique phrase could be changed to read something like: "possibility that many students might be excluded". The writer's use of "I'm afraid" in this context is not the kind of phrase one uses to introduce an unpleasant utterance as in "I'm afraid, you failed the test" where the phrase tones down what is about to be said or has been said in standard English. The sentence, "They think education is money", makes more sense only if it is interpreted from the point of view of the meaning of the Setswana sentence *Ba nagana gore thuto ke madi*, which means "They think they can make money through the education they offer".

Whereas some of the writer's expressions may be regarded as aberrant, others are not so. The idiom to "be on each other's throat" is a standard English expression which has been aptly used to evoke the adversarial attitude the two campuses appear to have adopted towards each other. This effective use of English is one of the indicators that contrary to what the "critical" model of TESOL would have us believe, English is part and parcel of ESL students' identity; they would like their English to be no less "correct" than the English of any higher education student.[73] The "critical" model of TESOL has rightly rejected the view that the usage of English is natural, neutral and beneficial, but has, unfortunately, tended to exaggerate the disempowering effects of using English in Africa and has portrayed the language as, according to Parmegiani,[74] "a gatekeeper" that prevents L2 speakers from advancing socio-economically; as "a colonizer of the mind", which when spread widely

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73 TL Ngwenya, "Designing an English syllabus for first-year law students" (Ph.D, PUCHE, 2001), pp. 6-26.
74 A Parmegiani, "Claiming the power of English in South Africa: From a birthright to an appropriation model for understanding English ownership" (Paper, conference Linguistic Society of Southern Africa and Southern African Applied Linguistics Association, University of KwaZulu/Natal, 5-7 July 2006), p. 3.

establishes and perpetuates Western values and undermines other languages; and as "a linguistic poacher" that wipes out African languages. While these labels carry some element of truth, the fact of the matter is they ignore that English and its concomitant power can be appropriated by L1 speakers of other languages. The shortcoming of this model is caused by its wrong assumption that a person can own only her/his mother tongue. Such an assumption is problematic in a country like SA where the competency of most South Africans to speak many languages is so extensive and sophisticated that it is often hard for them to define themselves only in terms of just one language. Yet, despite the presence of this phenomenon, the ownership of this language is often thought of as something that can be claimed only by birthright. A decentred model should be adopted that allows for English to be appropriated in such a way that it creates an ESL learner of multiple identity and multiple resources.

One notices a balanced outlook to life when one compares the North-West University talked about in the second paragraph with the Potchefstroom campus talked about in the third paragraph. On the one hand, the writer seems to look at education from the collectivist, egalitarian standpoint of the African education when he/she talks of the need to use education to develop poor rural communities. On the other hand, when the writer says that the Potchefstroom campus may have good resources and high standards in the third sentence, the writer gives the impression that he/she can view education from a capitalist perspective and appreciate the better social standing this bring about. One of the contributions Africa can give the world is her ability to synthesize apparently discordant elements; what Keats terms "the genius of negative capability."[75] The student's concern about empowering the poor and his/her appreciation of accumulating individual wealth implies the capacity to balance capitalism and socialism. The same capability to tolerate the co-existence of incongruent phenomena is also apparent in how hierarchy and egalitarianism can exist side by side in Africa. While royalty is exalted and promoted in Africa, it moves, lives and finds its being in living closely with commoners. Explaining her concept of second language learners' investment in their target language, Norton[76] says:

> If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which

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75   EC Pettet, *A selection from John Keats* (London, Longman, 1974), p. 236.
76   B Norton, *Identity and language learning...*, pp. 10-12.

> will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital … – a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources.

Norton then points out that investment should not be conflated with Gardner and Lambert's[77] notion of instrumental motivation because "a learner's motivation", she explains, "may be complex, contradictory and in a state of flux". Peripheral students' writing, then, should not be regarded from the viewpoint of a deficit model because ESL students possess "multiple identities and draw on multiple resources". [78]

Text B

High level of formality

The use of florid language in Text A above is closely linked to the target group's tendency to use a higher than usual level of formality, only that the former has more to do with figurative language and the latter with formal lexis. A good example of the use of very formal lexis in Text B is in the first paragraph. The paragraph consists of 64 words and twelve of these ("scrutinized", "established", "facilitate", "distinguish", "credentials", "accompany", "ignominious", "institution", "unequivocally", "surpasses", and "opportunities") are highly formal. The reason given for the presence of florid language in SABE above could also account for the preponderance of the high level of formality in Text B. One could add, though, that one other factor that may cause the participants to use formal language is the target group's exposure to the formal discourse of legal English. Danet[79] notes that "Even when texts are intended as a communication between two parties, they are typically cast in the third person. Loan application forms used by banks may speak of the 'borrower' and the 'lender', for instance". One of the accusations that have been leveled against written legal English itself is that it is difficult to comprehend. Wydick mentions sentences that "twist on, phrase within clause within clause, glazing the eyes and numbing the minds of … readers". Citing Mellinkoff, Wydick also observes that written legal English is wordy, unclear, pompous, and dull. "Good legal writing", he maintains, "should

77 RC Gardner & WE Lambert, *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning* (Rowley, MA, Newbury House, 1972), p. 15.
78 R Spacks, JG Carson, "Cultural background …?", *TESOL Quarterly* 32(4), 1998, pp. 735-740.
79 B Danet, "Legal discourse", T van Dijk, *Handbook of discourse society* (London, Academic Press, 1985), p. 283.

not differ, without good reason, from ordinary well-written English". [80]   This principle is shared by many law lecturers.

Oral narrative

The inverse of the use of florid language and a high level of formality is the target group's tendency to use oral narrative in the form of colloquialism, contractions, abbreviations, rhetorical questions, stabilizers, inaccuracies, context embedded deixis. The use of deixis "here", "us", "this", the abbreviation "Potchefstroom" to "Potch", and the rhetorical question of the second sentence are often unacceptable in academic writing. This might be negative transfer from what in SABE is relatively informal discourse, but is formal discourse in the West. For example, whereas a sermon is normally formal and non-interactive in Western society, in a typical black church, the preacher and the congregation may engage in very informal exchanges now and then during the preaching, making the sermon somewhat interactive.

The second reason is that the writer does not appear to distinguish between the use of what Cummins[81]   terms basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Joseph and Ramani[82] point out that of the four quadrants of Cummins' learning model, "Quadrant B is the quadrant where learners get the kind of support that has been called 'scaffolding'... quadrant B is a means to achieving … CALP". Quadrant B is the context embedded and cognitively demanding stage where learners are still trying to explore and solve a given problem or task. It is a very important quadrant for thinking things through and for creating meaning. The final stage of the essay writing requires that learners operate at the context reduced, cognitively demanding formal level of quadrant D. The present study argues that students should be allowed to operate mostly in quadrant B where they create meaning and explore the subject matter freely. Later they should transcend this stage and operate in quadrant D where they take into consideration their reader's expectations and produce an academically

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80   RC Wydick, *Plain English for lawyers* (Durham, North Carolina, Carolina Academic Press, 1994), p. 1.

81   J Cummins, *Negotiating identities: education for empowerment in a diverse society* (Ontario, California Association for Bilingual Education, 1996), p. 25.

82   M Joseph & E Ramani, "Academic excellence through language equity: a new bilingual BA degree (in English and Sesotho sa Leboa)", *Curriculum responsiveness case studies in higher education* (Pretoria, South African Vice-Chancellors' Association, 2004), pp. 237-261.

acceptable product which, however, contains their identity (cf. Biber[83] and Olson[84]).

The third reason why the writer might have chosen to use an informal style is that it offers more space for the writer to indicate her/his personal involvement in the subject matter. The pronouns "I" "we", "they", "us" are good indicators of the divide between the Potchefstroom and Mafikeng campuses the writer is talking about. Thus, the pronouns highlight the writer's personal, lived experience. Fourthly, another reason SABE speakers might choose to use the narrative mode rather than an expository one could be that some might deliberately want to indicate their desire to distance themselves from the academe's pretensions to being objective.

Unnecessary padding and repetition

In a rural setting like the one where the target group's campus is situated, life is fairly laid-back and when people converse, they often have the luxury of repeating things and if one hurries them, one might be regarded as impatient and ill-mannered. Usually, before speakers give their main point, they preface it with all manner of preliminaries. That is perhaps why speakers' turns are often long, uninterrupted and seldom overlap (cf. Gough). In the third paragraph we have examples of unnecessary repetitions: "I for one, personally", "commune with other students…and interact with one another". The illustrations above might be a carry over from this discourse pattern. Westerners' conversation is, however, different. The main point is often expressed directly and turn-taking is competitive – something like playing table tennis. Generally, the laid-back kind of African life-style is largely missing in English communities as illustrated in the English in phrases such as "time is money", "time and tide wait for no man", "wasting time", "redeeming time", "spend time", and "have no time to lose".

83 D Biber, "Spoken and written textual dimensions in English: Resolving the contradictory findings", *Language*, 62(2), 1986, pp. 384-414.
84 DR Olson, "From utterance to text: The bias of language in speech and writing", *Harvard Educational Review*, 29(2), 1977, pp. 257-281.

Localised lexis

Localised lexis is closely linked to the concept of multiple identity and multiple resources. Buthelezi[85] and Gough[86] point out that learners create and appropriate new terms that reflect their culture and lived experiences and where English does not have a term that adequately conveys the meaning the writer wants to convey, they borrow from the vernacular or give a new meaning to an existing English word. Localised lexis includes here, eponymy (the use of a proper noun as a common noun), semantic restriction (the narrowing down of the meaning of a word to focus on a specific aspect of a more general meaning), semantic extension (the addition of further meaning to an existing word, without the loss of the earlier meaning), semantic shift (change of the meaning of a word through history), loan words, and connotations.

Eponymy: "Msholozi", is a Toyota 4 by 4 van whose top is said to be like Jacob Zuma's (the former vice-president of South Africa) head. In Text A, "checkerses" is derived from the name of a retail store, Checkers.

Semantic restriction: "Boys" in South Africa has been used derogatorily to refer to black male menial labourers who are grown-up. In some African cultures the term "boys" could be used in a demeaning way to refer to an uncircumcised male adult. In these cultures a male becomes a man and is accorded respect only after he has reached the adolescent stage and has been circumcised at an initiation school. In Text A "children" has been used to refer to university students.

Semantic extension: "Bash" is a party where loud music and drinking are used. In Text A, a "starter-pack" is a small cheap car.

Semantic shift: The word "boer" originally meant an Afrikaner farmer (usually a male one) but now South African blacks sometimes use the term derogatorily to mean any white person. "Settlers" is sometimes used as a derogatory term for a white person.

Loan words: The term "magwinya", is derived from isiZulu and means leavened deep-fried cakes, "koeksusters", are Afrikaner doughnuts. "Roti" is a type of unleavened bread originally from the Indian subcontinent.

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85 G Gough, "Black English…", V de Klerk, *Focus…*, pp. 53-78.
86 Q Buthelezi, "South African black English…", R Mesthrie *Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics*, pp. 242-250; A Pennycook, "Introduction: Critical approaches to TESOL", *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 1999, pp. 329-348.

<u>Connotations</u>: Gough notes that there may be connotational differences between SABE and native-speaker usage in words like "fat" which for some SABE speaker may carry more favourable undertones while in Anglo-Saxon communities it often conveys negative connotations. "Struggle" and "land" evoke the history of political tensions between whites and blacks, occupation, dispossession, protest, resistance, and freedom.

Implications

The following implications could be drawn from the discussion above:

- Teachers should appreciate the uniqueness of the SABE students and use this variety as a means to access standard English.
- Teachers should not penalize SABE learners for the form-related errors of style, grammar, spelling, and punctuation at first and even when they do so later, the weighting given to these errors should be small; emphasis should be on the creation of meaning.
- Students should be made aware of the price they might have to pay for writing (consciously and/or subconsciously) unconventionally in English. Some lecturers might resist the use of SABE.
- For a remedial course like the one in the present study, workshops should be held with mainstream lectures at which it is persuasively demonstrated that SABE can be used as a resource rather than a problem to be eliminated and that some of the language problems their students experience can be induced by the nature of the discourse of their mainstream subject/s.
- Should teachers ignore the historical related remarks that sometimes reflect factual errors, subjectivity, stereo typing etc?

Conclusion

Students who use SABE in their writing can be empowered if their lecturers and these students themselves adopt SABE as a means for exploring and creating meaning and in the end for accessing standard English. In South Africa, competency in standard English is often a prerequisite for formal education, professional employment, and political participation. But using standard English should not mean sanitising all the unique personal expressions of ESL so that it is a clone of L1 writing. ESL students should

be encouraged to express their identity, values, and beliefs in English as long as this is done effectively in clear expression and not in clichés. Criteria for determining the effectiveness of the use of SABE are still at the unstable stage. When SABE speakers acquire more power than they have done, this will most probably be fixed.

The use of English being never natural, neutral, or always beneficial, the main principle of critical approaches to TESOL should consider the inequitable context in which learning and teaching take place: "The ways in which social relations may be culturally or ideologically maintained often tend", Pennycook[87] points out, "to be pessimistic, deterministic, and reproductive; that is to say, they tend to suggest that people are inescapably trapped in unequal relations of power and that most of what people do simply reproduces those relations. A more useful approach to critical work, particularly TESOL, however, is the inclusion of transformation".

Hull notes: "…we must allow different voices to be heard,…We must see how different voices can amend, qualify, and fundamentally challenge the popular, dominant myths of literacy and work". Green (sited by Hull) adds: "…a post-modern age is upon us, an age in which there is no widespread belief in a common rationality or a shared knowledge, but rather a growing conception of the world as continuously changing, irreducibly various, and multiple configuration".

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88   A Pennycook, "Introduction: Critical approaches to TESOL", *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 1999, pp. 329-348.

Appendices

[The one sided factual/historical impressions and cultural stereotypes as used by the students, have not been changed. They also do not form a serious part of the main discussion in the article]

Text A

When a donkey and a horse mate a mule is born, which is acceptable to neither donkeys nor horses so as the two universities merge, I have some opinion regarding the merge, firstly, I need to know whether the amalgamation is not going to have negative effects on us and secondly, I need to know whether we are going to receive the facilities we need.

There university of North-West is a university of orphans, while Potchefstroom is the university of the rich and white. The University of the North was build to accommodate children from the poor and disadvantaged homes, that were not considered years gone by. This was the initiative of a Black person in order to bring a light and future to the largely Tswana disadvantaged children; those whose blankets are short. University of North-West is concerned about the development of rural areas and people. It understands the needs of rural areas.

In the case of the Potchefstroom University, during the years of the struggle, being the Apartheid time, this university was runned smoothly just like all boers' universities in the country but could accomodate a black person not because some will never afford to pay tuitions but that it was racist. Potchefstroom is the university of the rich and many whites there drive Msholozi's. Potchefstroom University may have better resources and high academic standards but it only knows that if you want to learn, you must have money. They think that education is money. Potch has got many workers who keep the campus clean. When people who are used to working at a clean campus are forced to merge with a campus that is always full of papers, Checkerses, neglected gardens, they will show dislike and begin practicing their racism.

I do not think that Potchefstroom university is going to afford any poor person in it. If it is real that the merger will happen, I am afraid that there is going to be a high rate of exclusion. I am afraid people from these universities will be on each other's throat more than they will be pursuing knowledge and skills. I do not think that Potchefstroom university is going to afford any poor person in it.

Text B

The two universities should be scrutinized individually. UNW was established in order to facilitate the production of graduate of distinguished credentials. But this mission was not accomplished because of the ignominious foundation on which the institution was based. Potchefstroom deserves to be the headquarters because it has unequivocally proven that surpasses UNW. It proffers opportunities for specialization and access to diverse career paths.

Most people know the medium of instruction at Potch as Afrikaans, most people i.e. staff and students here use their first language which is mainly seTswana everywhere. What if Potch brings its medium of instruction here? That is another fear of us, students of University of North-West. It is not wise for this merger, most students here are not from rich families and at times unable to pay their tuition fees. Obviously, this merged is going to cause the of UNW's fees to meet those of Potchefstroom.

I think the consequences of the merger will be very detrimental towards our social relations with each other, i.e. a new, acrimonious environment and atmosphere or situation will be created. I for one, personally know that the students in this university will definitely find it very difficult to commune with other students. Our racial differences will generate a lot of conflict and confusion and we will find it very difficult to accept and appreciate and interact with one another that is in the beginning but maybe eventually the situation will get better some people might argue.

Our land is divided and the so-called first world universities like Potch are in the developed world economy and the so-called third world universities like my university have not even reached the developing stage. In the eyes of whites' blacks men will remain boys and in the eyes of blacks white men will always be settlers. While blacks live in poverty, whites live on the fat of the land.

Our foods and music are not the same so there might be clashes during bashes and in the cafeteria. Black student would like to have their ting, pap and magwinya; white student might prefer pizza, koeksusters, and potjiekos, moerkoffie. Throw in the Indian students' in the mixture with their tastes for archaar, briane, and roti, there is no company that can cater for all these needs at the same time. Blacks like mbaranga, kwaito and rap, whites want their boeremusiek, vastrap and God knows what else. This is a sure recipe for a madhouse.