

UC Riverside

Issues in Applied Linguistics

Title

Nativization of English among Bantu Language Speakers in South Africa

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9748v75z>

Journal

Issues in Applied Linguistics, 15(2)

ISSN

1050-4273

Author

Makalela, Leketi

Publication Date

2007

DOI

10.5070/L4152005082

Peer reviewed

Nativization of English among Bantu Language Speakers in South Africa

Leketi Makalela
University of Limpopo

This study investigates characteristic features of Black South African English (BSAE), paying attention to the role of the Bantu language substrate system in the nativization process of the variety. Using prototypical features identified in previous studies and additional data from speakers of another Bantu language, Sepedi, this study examines the influence of first language features on morpho-syntactic, phonological, and discourse and pragmatic features. The results of the study show that Bantu language logic plays a pivotal role in framing the rules and systematic production of the BSAE features. It is therefore argued that developments in BSAE show that it has evolved into an endonormative variety in its own right and that it has future prospects for standardization due to the demographic strength and improved social rank of its speakers. Recommendations for language planning are offered in the end for adaptation to other comparable situations.

Research on the spread of English as an international language has shown that 80% of its speakers are non-traditional mother tongue speakers (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). The World Englishes (WE) paradigm, which has for the past 20 years become one of the frameworks explaining the development of English as an international language, categorizes the distribution of English across the globe in terms of the Kachruvian model that distinguishes three concentric circles of acquisition: inner (traditional native speakers), outer (second language speakers of English), and expanding circles (speakers of English in foreign language contexts) (Kachru, 1986). The revelation that the majority of the users of English are not traditional native speakers has inadvertently sparked an interest in the nature and status of these new English varieties (e.g., Bolton, 2002).

The South African situation shows a similar pattern where the traditional native speakers constitute about 5% of the population while the majority of the English users are outer circle speakers with 9 indigenous African (Bantu) languages as their home languages: Sepedi, Setswana, Sesotho, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, Siswati, Xitsonga, and Tshivenda. Whereas this outer circle variety, generally known as Black South African English (BSAE, hereafter), has increasingly received attention in recent scholarly works (e.g., Coetzee-Van Rooy & Verhoef, 2000; Genrich-de Lisle, 1985; Kasanga, 2006; Makalela, 2004; Roodt, 1993; Wade, 1995), there is very little systematic examination of the role of one's mother tongue in its naturalization and development as a distinct variety in its own right. This study therefore seeks to investigate the role of mother tongue influence on features of BSAE features cited as prototypical in previous studies (e.g., Buthelezi, 1995; De

Klerk, 1999, De Klerk & Gough, 2002; Gough, 1996; Kasanga, 2006; Makalela, 1998, 2004) and to show how the rules of the Bantu languages, operationally described as the “Bantu language logic” (Makalela, 2004), serve as a reference point and reinforcement for systematic production of the nativized English speech forms. In the end, educational implications for English pedagogy, which is torn between standard norms and localized forms, and inferences on English language planning for South Africa are drawn for adaptation to comparable New Englishes contexts.

ENGLISHES IN THE WORLD

The spread of English as an international language has undoubtedly expanded the contexts of acquisition and use. Variation theory typically classifies English into four major categories: native English, new English, contact English and foreign English (e.g., Platt, Webber, & Ho, 1984). Apart from British English which has a slightly different history of development, native English varieties have developed in settlement colonies like the US, Australia, and New Zealand. From eclectic descriptions of linguistic properties in both English studies and corpus linguistic paradigms, it has been observed, as early as the 1960s, that the notion of Standard English was country-specific (e.g., Greenbaum, 1996; Meyer, 2002; Quirk, 1990). However, international English effectively still referred to these Standard English varieties, which were used as yardsticks to judge grammatical correctness of non-mother tongue speakers. Some scholars, such as Crystal (1997), argue against the variationist view of diversity in core English varieties and predict possible convergence of these standards through what is referred to as the World Standard Spoken English (WSSE) because English, accordingly, enables all its native speakers to “have their cake and eat it” (quoted in Bolton, 2002, p. 4), referring to the high degrees of mutual intelligibility.

The foreign English category involves varieties of English spoken in foreign language acquisition contexts. These are contexts where comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981, 1985) of the target language is limited to the classroom situation. In countries like South Korea, Japan, and China, English is required and learned for international communication, and plays no other major role in national domains. As a result, there is a high proliferation of teaching English as a foreign language programs that are designed solely to cater to the English needs of learners in this expanding circle. It is this global necessity of English that caught the attention of popularisers and futurologists like McCrum, Cran, and MacNeil (1986) who project that

the rise of English is a remarkable success story... English at the end of the twentieth century is more widely scattered, more widely spoken and written, than any other language has ever been. It has become the language of the planet, the first truly global language (p. 19)

The third category of the varieties of English is encompassed by the concept

of:contact English, which refers to pidgins and creoles. On the one hand, pidgins developed in trade colonies like West Africa and Papua New Guinea while creoles, on the other hand, emerged in plantation colonies such as the Caribbean Islands (Mufwene, 2002). A typical example of creole English is the African American Vernacular, which, according to the work of Smitherman (2000), Rickford and Rickford (2000), and Baugh (2000), emerged from the contact between English and West African languages. Although pidgins and creoles are considered non-core varieties of English, several scholars show that they are 'native speaker varieties' and in some cases they are learned at school (Cheshire, 1991; Todd, 1984).

New Englishes developed in exploitation colonies in Africa and India. These varieties make up the category that gave rise to the concept 'World Englishes,' which acknowledges the new sociolinguistic reality of English in countries that are traditionally non-mother tongue speaking. The concept 'Englishes' did not appear in scholarly work until Braj Kachru and Larry Smith began using it in 1978 (Bolton, 2003). According to Kachru and Smith (1985),

Englishes' symbolizes the functional and formal variation in the language, and its international acculturation, for example, in West Africa, in Southern Africa, in East Africa, in South Asia, in Southeast Asia, in the West Indies, in the Philippines, and in East Africa, and in the traditional English-using countries: the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The language now belongs to those who use it as their first language, and to those who use it as an additional language, whether in its standardized form or in its localized forms (p. 210).

From this polycentric approach to English, it would appear that the notion of 'native' or 'first language speaker' is expanding, in both chronological and functional senses. The New Englishes paradigm involves the outer circle varieties, whose context of emergence is summarized by Platt et al. (1984) as follows:

- They are developed through the education system.
- They are developed in an area where a native variety of English was not the language spoken by most of the population.
- They are used for a range of functions among those who speak or write it [English] in the region where it is used.
- They have become localized or nativized by adopting some language features of its own, such as sounds, intonation patterns, sentence structure, words, and expressions.

This study was prompted by the last category – localization and its relevance to BSAE as an outer circle variety – and guided by this question: Does the Bantu language substrate system influence the nativization of BSAE? If so, how does it account for rule-govern-ness, if any, of this emerging variety?

LINGUISTIC PROPERTIES OF BSAE AS AN OUTER CIRCLE VARIETY

The following nonstandard features were generated from speakers of the Bantu language group in South Africa as observed in various studies on BSAE (e.g., Buthelezi, 1995; De Klerk, 1999, De Klerk & Gough, 2002; Gamaroff, 1988; Gough, 1996; Kasanga, 2006; Makalela, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004; Mesthrie, 1997; Mothoa, 2000; Roodt, 1993; Van Rooy, 2000, 2006; Wade, 1995). In order to provide a systematic description of this outer-circle English variety, its features are described under the following major categories: morpho-syntax, phonology, discourse and pragmatics.

Morpho-syntactic features

Morpho-syntactic features in this study are based on inflectional morphology and verbal argumentation. They are discussed below under (a) – (d).

a) *Extension of progressive aspect to stative verbs*

A plethora of studies on BSAE (e.g. Buthelezi, 1995; Gamaroff, 1986, 1988; Makalela, 2004; Roodt, 1993; Van der Walt & Van Rooy, 2002; Van Rooy, 2006) shows that speakers of English with a Bantu language background in South Africa extend the progressive aspect /-ing/ to stative verbs as in the following sentences (1-3):

1. We are belonging to the new South Africa.
2. I was not knowing his name.
3. I am having a brother.

As reported in Makalela (2004), the verbs, *belong* (1), *know* (2), and *have* (3) belong to a category of verbs known as statives, which are traditionally distinguished from action verbs (e.g., *eat*). Typically, Standard English varieties do not permit the use of the /-ing/ suffix with stative verbs (e.g., Quirk, 1990). Over time, however, this rule was relaxed with regard to the use of *have*. For example, *having* can be used with non-possessive (abstract) objects as in *I am having a party*, but it creates a non-standard formation when used with possessive (concrete) objects as in **I am having a brother* [I have a brother]. Studies on BSAE show that BSAE speakers tend not to observe these standard norms in favor of indiscriminate usage of the progressive aspect.

From a second language acquisition model of interlanguage (see Selinker, 1972), it is possible to explain this occurrence as a type of overgeneralization strategy – a strategy also used by children acquiring their first language. However, this strategy does not account for the systematic stabilization of this feature in non-

mother tongue contexts. To this effect, I will claim that aspectual theory, discussed below and in Makalela (2004), supports the preponderance of language transfer (see for example Lado, 1957; Odlin, 1989 for discussion on cross-linguistic transfer) where a Bantu temporal logic exaggerates production of the progressive aspect.

Application of the theory of aspect that distinguishes telicity from perfectivity sheds some light on the analysis of the progressive aspect. With regard to telicity, two types are commonly distinguished: telic and atelic (Comrie, 1976; Dahl, 1985; Saeed, 1997; Verkuyl, 1999). Telic situations have a natural endpoint as in *I am walking to church* whereas atelic situations as in *I am walking in the bush* do not have a terminal endpoint. This means that our semantic intuition of telic-atelic in the two sentences is not governed by the progressive inflection /- ing/, which both verbs have. Perfectivity, on the contrary, shows a heavy reliance on verbal conjugations as *John rode a bicycle* is different from *John was riding a bicycle*, where *rode* denotes completion while *was riding* shows incompleteness of the event.

Of particular relevance to the overgeneralization of the progressive aspect is that some languages rely heavily on verbal arguments (telicity) and less on inflections (perfectivity), and vice-versa (see Comrie, 1976; Dahl, 1985 on the theory of aspect). English tends to use inflections to distinguish habitual and progressive aspects as in *I am walking in the bush* (progressive situation) and *I walk in the bush* (habitual situation). In contrast, African Bantu languages strictly use verbal arguments to articulate these aspectual meanings. Thus, the morphological distinction between habitual and progressive aspects in these languages is blurred as illustrated in example 4:¹

4. Monna o ja bogobe
Man+SM1 + eat-HAB/PROG + porridge
'A man eats porridge' or 'A man is eating porridge'

This sentence shows that a similar verbal form *ja* can be used to denote either habituality or progressiveness. It is other contextual arguments (pre- or post-verbal conjugations) that explicitly separate habitual from progressive aspect. For example, a preverbal emphatic marker morpheme /a/ can be used to emphasize habitual events as in 5 below:

5. Monna o a ja bogobe
Man+SM1+ EMPH HAB +eat-PRES+ porridge
'A man eats (does eat) porridge'

Similarly, progressive aspect can be explicitly stated through insertion of the /sa/ emphatic marker, which shows that "something that was going on for a while is still in progress," as in:

6. Monna o sa ja bogobe

Man+SM1+EXP PROG +eat-PRES+ porridge
 ‘A man is (still) eating porridge’

While examples (5) and (6) temporarily resolve the habitual/progressive conflation, it should be stressed that these forms are used only for emphasis, not as grammaticalizations for habituality and progressiveness, respectively. For example, the /a/ marker associated with habituality in (5) can denote both habitual and progressive mood in intransitive verbs as in example (7) below:

7. Monna o a ja
 Man+SM1+HAB/PROG+eat-PRES
 ‘A man eats/is eating’

Taken together, examples 4, 5, 6, and 7 underscore the fact that African languages do not mark distinctions between progressive and stative aspects through inflectional conjugations. Rather, verbal arguments and context of usage are used for this purpose. In other words, the temporal logic in Bantu languages does not conceptually distinguish the view of present time in terms of habituality and progressiveness. Based on this analysis, a point can be made that overuse of the progressive aspect, apart from being a matter of a simplification strategy, reflects the Bantu language logic where verbal inflections do not play an important role in the articulation of aspectual meaning.

b) *Tense sequencing*

In African varieties of English (Schmied, 1991), the sequencing of tenses in complex and compound sentences deviates from normative English varieties. Analysis of this feature has not been sufficiently described in the BSAE literature, except for superficial reference (e.g., Gough, 1996; De Klerk & Gough, 2002). The data from Sepedi native speakers show that only the verb in the first clause is marked for past tense in narrative sentences. The following sentences were sampled from the data:

8. They took one frog and go with it home.
9. Many more guys came to me and pretend as if they are my friend.

The above sentences reflect narrative tense in Bantu languages in which the past tense of the subsequent clauses is not marked by verbal inflections. Rather, it is the argument structure of the whole sentence or discourse that marks narrative tense as illustrated in the Sepedi example in (10) below:

10. **Re** ile toropong **ra** reka diaparo
 We+go-PST+town+NAR PRON+ buy-PRES+clothes
 ‘We went to town and bought clothes’

Of particular importance in (10) above is that there is a special narrative pronoun, *ra*, which is dependent on the subjectival pronoun/noun, *re* (it may be a different pronominal system depending on the noun class prefix it substitutes). Once the narrative pronoun is used, the tense of the subsequent verb retains the present tense form. Again, it is the verbal argument (present tense form and narrative pronoun) that marks narration in Bantu languages – a process juxtaposing the English narrative marking, which relies on simple present tense form (inflections). These different linguistic representations are reflective of differential temporal ‘reasonings’ between native speakers of English and speakers of Bantu languages.

One of the prominent theories of tense, developed by Reichenbach (1947), that provides further insights into this phenomenon distinguishes three points governing speaker’s choice of tense: point of speech (S), point of event (E), and point of reference (R). Dahl (1985) later modified this theory by adding temporal frame (F) to create context of speech. While this model can be plugged in to analyze tense in every language, it is worth noting that temporal reasoning is culture specific, making these temporal points of perception different. For example, the points of event in (10), that is, ‘going to town’ (*re ile toropong*) and ‘buying’ (*ra reka*) are not perceived as being temporally sequential or distinct because time in this case is seen as a big chunk of the whole. This in part explains why the grammatical form of the subsequent verb (*reka*) does not reflect aspect, but adopts the aspect of the previous verb through the narrative marker *ra*. It can be ferreted out, therefore, that a Bantu way of thinking about temporality in narration – where the point of events is viewed as one – is transferred when speakers communicate in English.

c) Agreement markers

Whereas nonstandard usages of agreement markers can be found in normative varieties of English, especially in developmental stages of acquisition, research in BSAE reports omission and use of the third person agreement marker /-s/ with plural subjects as one of the predominant features in BSAE (e.g., De Klerk & Gough, 2002; Lanham, 1967). The following prototypical examples were collected from Sepedi native speakers:

11. The boy want to catch the frog.
12. The man and the frog goes into the water

Whereas omission as a simplification strategy – also found among L1 speakers in the developmental stages of acquisition – explains the speech forms in (11) and (12) above at the surface level, it appears that the logic of the agreement system in Bantu languages which regularizes the agreement marking underlies production of these features. Agreement marking in Bantu languages is dependent on the Noun Class Prefix system that regularizes subjectival concords that are paired into odd (for singular noun classes) and even (for plural noun classes) numbers. For example, all nouns in Class 1 in Sepedi, Sesotho, and Setswana – a Bantu

language subgroup called Sotho – use /o/ as the agreement marker as shown in the following sentence:

13. **Monna o** ja nama
 Man+SM1+eat-PRES+ meat
 ‘The man eats (is eating) meat’

Similarly, Class 2 (even class) illustrates the regularization pattern where the Noun Class prefix 2, /Ba-/, assumes a /ba/ subjectival marker. This phenomenon is shown in example (14) below:

14. **Banna ba** ja nama
 Men+SM2+eat+PRES+meat
 ‘Men eat meat’

Both (13) and (14) show an alliterative and regularized agreement system whose influence in the production of agreement in English cannot be ruled out. Because inflections do not play an important role in marking agreement in Bantu languages, omission of the /-s/ marker and extension of this marker to plural subjects may be a substrate influence of the Bantu system. Taking a simplification strategy of learners in second language learning as a general contributor, we can also add that this underlying logic that regularizes singular/plural agreement in Bantu languages exaggerates the idiosyncratic use of the third person agreement marker /-s/ in BSAE as seen in examples (11) and (12).

d) *Retention of question word order*

Retention of question word order is one of the commonly observed features among Bantu language speakers (Gough, 1996). Typical examples of sentences that show inversion of auxiliary verbs in the subordinate clauses are illustrated in (15) and (16) below:

15. I was not told why did he go home.
 16. I don’t know when will he come to my room.

Schmied (1991) observes that maintaining the question word – verb-subject – word order must be interpreted as a simplification or regularization of the formation rules for all types of questions, direct and indirect (p. 76). However, little is said about the substratum common to Bantu languages where the basic interrogative word order is retained in indirect speech patterns. In the following example, the interrogative, *o reng a tlogile*, is retained in the subordinate clause:

17. Ga ke tsebe gore **o reng a tlogile**
 NEG+I+know+that+he+ why+AUX+leave+PST

'I don't know why did he leave'

In light of example (17) above, we can argue that in addition to simplification tendencies reported in previous studies on BSAE, the mother tongue substrate system reinforces and naturalizes this feature. This nativization process becomes even clearer in the phonological features of BSAE speakers, which are described in the following section.

Phonological features

BSAE pronunciation at the segmental (vowels and consonants) and the suprasegmental levels (stress, intonation, prominence, etc.) is observably derived from a Bantu language background and marks a certain degree of phonological distinctiveness in African English (Gough, 1996; Hundley, 1963; Jacobs, 1994; Lanham, 1984; Schmied, 1991; Van Rooy & Van Huysteen, 2000; Wissing, 2002). These phonological patterns tend to be retained even in the educated variety of non-native English among speakers of Bantu languages.

a) Vowel phonology

Research shows that the use of vowels among BSAE speakers can be explained in terms of five (Nguni languages) and seven (Sotho languages) vowel systems (e.g., De Klerk & Gough, 2002; Gough, 1996; Jacobs, 1994; Van Rooy, 2002). This limited number of vowels results in idiosyncratic pronunciation of English vowels traceable to Bantu languages. Analysis of tape-recorded speech protocols among Sepedi native speakers supports three main claims made in earlier studies on vowel phonology. First, there is generally no length distinction between the vowels [I] and [i:] as in *hit* and *hid*, respectively. Secondly, due to the general shortening of diphthongs to monophthongs, the front, mid front vowel [e] is used instead of the low front [æ] in words like *cat* and *fat*. In other contexts, diphthongs are extended over two syllables giving, for example, the /awu/ sound which is produced in words like *south*, and *mouth*. Finally, the *schwa* is realized as a full vowel [a] in words ending with /-er/ like *sister* (see De Klerk & Gough, 2002; Gough, 1996 for a complete overview). These results found among Sepedi native speakers are similar to findings in the previous studies and show that there are general features that cut across various languages in the Bantu languages of South Africa. More comparative studies are needed, especially in minority languages like Tshivenda and Xitsonga, for conclusive claims to be made.

b) Consonant phonology

Three consonantal behaviors mark some degree of distinctiveness characterizing Black South African English as observed in previous research (see Gough, 1996; Jacobs, 1994; Van Rooy, 2000) and in the present study. First, the [θ] and [ð] consonants that occur in words like /*thigh*/ and /*these*/ are pronounced as [t] and [d], respectively. Second, the consonant cluster /kl/ as in *clever* and *club* as well as

the glottal stop as in *little* and *total* are pronounced as an ejective lateral affricate, /tɬ'/, which is directly transferred from Sotho languages (e.g., words like *tla tla* for 'will come' in Sepedi). Third, [ŋ] as in *English* and *younger*, is produced as a single velar nasal as the case may be in Sotho languages where it occurs in both medial and final positions (Makalela, 2004). The production of an ejective lateral affricate and single nasal velar consonants has not been reported among BSAE speakers with Nguni language background and its occurrence as a general feature of BSAE cannot be claimed, given this limited data. Other consonantal features transferred from mother tongue are the trilled realization of /r/, final devoicing, and regressive assimilation (see for example De Klerk & Gough 2002; Van Rooy, 2000).

c) *Suprasegmental features*

There is a remarkable distinction between African languages and English with regard to intonation, reduced speech, linking, prominence, and stress. As for stress, Kleinhenz and Wissing (2000) show that Bantu languages in South Africa have a phrase prosodic system so that they can be classified as syllable-timed rather than stress-timed as is the case with Standard English varieties (p. 69). With greater influence from Bantu phonological structure, where there is no stress, but tonal lengthening of the penultimate syllable, stress placement among the respondents was predictably placed on the penultimate syllable as in the following example:

18. deter**M**ine.

While this finding supports those in the previous literature, Van Rooy's (2002) study of stress placement among seven female Tswana speakers shows exceptions to this trend. Using Optimality Theory, he shows that stress in BSAE is also placed in final and antepenultimate positions in words like *because* and *about*. Although his study relied on a small data set exclusively from female respondents, it is worth noting that stress placement was also found on the penultimate syllables. Predication of penult stress placement, which coincides with penultimate lengthening (mora) in Bantu languages, cannot be ruled out. As speakers imitate the stress-timed pattern of Standard English, stress placement on antepenultimate and final positions may be anticipated as shown in *deterMIne* (18). In addition, both content and function words receive equal stress in BSAE, making it difficult to detect phonological prominence in a sentence. Phonological prominence is therefore not achieved by word stress, but is attained by the syntactic organization of the words (see discussion below).

Pragmatics and Discourse Features

Linguists view language not only as a conglomeration of structural units carrying meanings, but also as a tool for performing certain functions according to social values and norms (see Halliday, 1985), which are culture-specific. Unsurprisingly then, BSAE has distinguished itself from Standard English varieties with respect to

pragmatic and discourse features (Kasanga, 2006). These include topic promotion devices, gender marking, modality markers, and circumlocation.

a) *Topic promotion devices*

Pragmatic constructions generally called topic promotion devices are not unique to non-native varieties of English. Left-dislocation and topicalization, as typical examples, have received a considerable amount of attention among native speakers of English (e.g., Michaelis, 1981; Michaelis & Gregory, 2001). They have, however, a special stylistic prominence among Bantu language speakers, occurring with higher frequencies than they do in normative varieties of English (e.g., Gough, 1996; Mesthrie, 1997). Since phonological prominence is not achieved by word stress, syntactic organization of the sentence is used to promote certain topics – hence the pragmatic notion of topic promotion. The distinction between topicalization and left dislocation is somewhat functionally blurred, but for the purpose of this paper it suffices to distinguish them as follows:

Topicalisation contains a gap in the clause, which corresponds to an argument position that the preclausal NP can be construed as filling, whereas left dislocation contains an argument – position pronoun, which is co-referential with the preclausal NP (Michaelis & Gregory, 2001, p. 167).

Topicalization can be observed in example (19) below:

19. The boy and the girl they are in the bush.

and left-dislocation in example (20):

20. My granny I will visit her tomorrow.

Though topic promotion is used among native speakers of English especially in oral speeches through hesitation phenomena, truncated or incomplete sentences (Schmied, 1991), it is institutionalized even in formal expressions and writing among Bantu language speakers. Topicalization can, in part, be explained by the word order system in Bantu languages where anaphoric personal pronouns take up the subject of the sentence. In the case of left dislocation, the personal pronoun assumes the object position for emphasis. Additionally, the copying of resumptive pronouns may be exaggerated by the Noun Class Prefix system in Bantu languages as illustrated in example (21) below:

21. **Batho ba** ja bogobe
 People+ SM1+eat-PRES+ porridge
 ‘People they are eating porridge’

As shown above, duplication of the subject marker (*Ba (tho) ba...*) results in topicalization when the Bantu substrate structure is transferred to English. Arguably, this shows that this tendency is not simply a matter of incompleteness or hesitation, as it might be in native English speech, but is due to a morpho-syntactic logic whose function is to highlight the topic of an utterance which has no phonological prominence.

b) *Gender marking*

Conflation of masculine pronouns with feminine pronouns and vice-versa is a prominent feature among non-native English speakers. Among Bantu language speakers, typical conflations resemble extract (22) below:

22. The girl looks at his dog when the dog try [tries] to search a frog.

Such examples can be traced to the mother tongue pronominal system. Bantu languages do not distinguish between feminine and masculine pronouns in both anaphoric and cataphoric contexts – a phenomenon also noted by Bolton (2003) in Chinese. The following Sepedi example illustrates the gender-blurred pronominal system:

23. O a tla
SM1+PRES MARKER + come-PRES
'He/she is coming'

The pronoun, /o/, which also functions as the subject marker, stands for either 'he' or 'she,' depending on the context of use; this is because gender in Bantu languages is not marked in the grammar. This system of gender marking may be transferred to BSAE.

c) *Modality markers in BSAE*

Modality markers generally mark a degree of directness and politeness in discourse. These markers, which were classically associated with the process of hedging, find their theoretical basis in the work on speech act theory. In this study, I adopt the notion of modality markers used by House and Kasper (1981) to distinguish two categories: downgraders (detensifiers), which de-emphasize the force of impact an utterance has on the addressee, and upgraders (intensifiers) that increase the impact of the utterance. Prototypical downgraders found in Black English in South Africa are represented in the following examples found in the Sepedi data (see also De Klerk & Gough, 2002; Gough 1996; Makalela 2004):

24. Myself, I think I can say divorce is not a solution
25. According to me I think parents need to take action on this one.
26. Sorry sir, in fact, I am having a problem

Extracts (24) – (26) show that the speakers employ double or multiple downgraders (e.g., ‘I think + I can say’), signaling a pragmatic strategy of politeness common among speakers of Bantu languages.

In order to intensify an utterance, the upgrader translatable as ‘in fact,’ which is frequently followed by ‘actually,’ is generally foregrounded as in the following conversation between a lecturer (B) and a student (A) (see Makalela, 2004):

27. A. Morning sir (getting into the office)
 B. Morning, have a sit.
 A. **In fact**, I did not write your test last week
 B. Why didn’t you?
 A. **Actually**, I was not here on campus

The foregrounding of ‘in fact’ and ‘actually’ among Bantu English speakers differs from Standard English usage. Whereas they assume an initial position in this variety, these cohesive devices are typically used to emphasize a previously stated point in normative English discourse. They can be explained as a consequence of the lack of phonological prominence in Bantu languages, as discussed above, and as a matter of language transfer; for example, the fronting of similar expressions such as *gabotse* (‘in fact/actually’) is quite common in Sepedi conversations. The modality markers reported here and in Gough (1996) show that cultural orientations and linguistic behavior from a Bantu language background are mapped onto the use of English.

d) *Circumlocution and idioms in written discourse*

Because ‘preserving face’ is important in many African cultures (Schmied, 1991, p. 93), various communication strategies are used in BSAE to accomplish this. Some of these strategies are indirect discourse patterns, use of decorative language, and idiomatic expression translated from African languages. Although it is difficult to make large generalizations of discourse behaviors, it is generally noted that discourse according to Western cultures follows the maxim ‘short and to the point,’ while African cultures value a ‘beat around the bush’ philosophy, proceeding at a measured pace. One example of this indirectness is one observed in the following essay written by a student at the University of Limpopo:

28. We are six in number in my family including my parents, four girls, father and mother. My father was working in Johannesburg railway before it can be spoornet as a ticket examiner whereas my mother is still *holding a sharp knife by its end* as a teacher in order for them to *feed our mouths and keep the fire burning*.

In my family there is nothing important than education because my parents were educated and also God the almighty because everything in this world is because of him. The way my parents were interested in education, fortunately their children also educated, having their diplomas and degrees....This is

because my parents were encouraging them to work hard when they were at school in order to have better future like them. *So now I am the only one left in the family as I am at school in order to be educated but on the other hand I am not left because myself too have a diploma which my family didn't consider it.* They wish if I could have a degree or honours and is then that maybe I am educated.

This excerpt shows that a style of circumlocution and the use of localized idioms become entrenched in written discourse among students from Bantu language backgrounds. Because this style is not commensurate with the norms of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) that emphasise conciseness and topic sentences, BSAE-speaking students may not perform well in composition classes premised on process writing.

THE FUTURE OF BSAE

The morpho-syntactic, phonological, discourse and pragmatic features described above show that a distinct nonstandard variety of English among Bantu language speakers has emerged. Whereas some of these properties can be explained in terms of overgeneralization strategies in second language acquisition – an explanation provided in previous studies on BSAE – the present analysis has illustrated that the transfer of the Bantu language substrate system plays a pivotal role in entrenching these linguistic forms. The mapping of Bantu language logic by BSAE speakers provides a rule-governed basis for the systematic production of these BSAE features.

One of the factors leading to the continued development of BSAE and the spread of BSAE across a wider spectrum of Bantu language speakers centers on the context in which BSAE is acquired (see Buthelezi, 1995; De Klerk & Gough, 2002; Gough, 1996). Limited input from traditional native speakers, due to their minority status (about 5% of the population), has created a context for institutionalization and the spread of endonormative forms from non-native to non-native speaker. The teachers who speak BSAE themselves are seen as the main transmitters and acceptors of the localized norms (Buthelezi, 1995; Gough, 1996; Makalela, 1998; Van der Walt & Van Rooy, 2002). Continuation of this trend aligns well with Brutt-Griffler's (2002) view that the varieties of new English reflect a phase in the history of English language resulting "not from the faulty and imperfect learning of the non-mother tongue speakers, but from the nature of the process of macro-acquisition, language spread and change" (p.182).

For BSAE, such a process of macro-acquisition seems inevitable given the demographic strength of the users of these language forms. Some scholars (e.g., Titlestad, 1996; Wright, 1996) have argued that improved English language teaching in the country will result in mastery of standard norms – a position blind to the fact that such improvements will need a massive deployment of native English speaking teachers in the schools. Under the present sociolinguistic context where

speakers of African languages massively outnumber traditional native speakers of English, such a proposition may not be tenable. There are three decisive factors influencing the future of BSAE: (1) the foreign or second language status of English among learners who use Bantu languages in their home environment; (2) the minority status of native speakers who model standards; and (3) the spread of endonormative forms through the media. On the latter, major English newspapers like *The Sowetan* and *City Press* whose target audience is BSAE speakers use local vocabulary and expressions taken from Bantu languages (e.g. *ubuntu* 'humanity,' *mampara* 'lazy,' *lobola* 'bride gift'). Given these factors, nativization of BSAE will likely be further entrenched, with modifications through natural processes of language development.

The development of BSAE and its use in public domains, due to the prestigious social status of its speakers in prominent positions, gives it clout to develop further in the new political dispensation. Its future role in education, however, rests mainly with English language planning, which should seek a common thread among the South African Englishes that are still racially stratified: White South African English (WSAE), South African Indian English (SAIE), and Colored English (CE). First, there is a need for internal innovation of BSAE norms based on large corpora. Once internal innovations have been carried out, the BSAE model can be used in a large standardization of commonly shared norms (see Chick & Wade, 1997; Mesthrie, 1999; Wade 1995). The new standards will need to employ the following steps, among others:

- The use of cross-variety corpora to identify commonly shared features;
- The codification of written norms through dictionaries and grammar outlines; and
- Material design and teacher (re)training programs based on the local forms.

Whereas some scholars have shown that BSAE is in a liberation and expansion phase (Van der Walt & Van Rooy, 2002; Wissing, 2002) where there is confusion between the use of exonormative and edonormative forms, the Bantu language logic described in this study suggests rather that BSAE has reached an endonormative phase as a variety in its own right. The rules of the Bantu language systematically govern production of the BSAE features described. Given that the Bantu language substrate system is key to the nativization of BSAE, its future development as a distinct outer circle variety seems secured.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to examine the role of the Bantu language substrate system in the nativization of BSAE features. Analysis of morpho-syntactic, phonological,

and discourse and pragmatic features showed that the rules of Bantu language logic naturalize the variety, paving its way to becoming a distinct endonormative outer circle English. It was noted that while the future of the variety is secure due to the demographic strengths of its speakers, the social prestige of its users, and reliance on Bantu language logic, its role in education needs systematic language planning. This involves studying corpora of different sub-varieties and sister varieties in South Africa. Taken together, it appears that the nativization of BSAE, through Bantu language logic, as an outer-circle variety reflects a new sociolinguistic reality of language spread and change in the history of English as an international language (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Kachru, 1986). For this reason, there is an opportunity for corpus studies and proactive language planning for BSAE and comparable new Englishes to meet the future demands of this sociolinguistic reality.

NOTE

¹ See appendix for a list of grammatical abbreviations.

REFERENCES

- Baugh, J. (2000). *Beyond Ebonics. Language pride and racial prejudice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bolton, K. (2002, October) World Englishes: Approaches, issues and debate. Paper presented at the meeting of the International Association for World Englishes. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Bolton (2003) *Chinese Englishes: A sociolinguistic history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buthlezi, Q. (1995). South African Black English: Lexical and syntactic characteristics. In R. Mesthrie. (Ed.). *Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics*. Cape Town: David Philip publishers.
- Brutt-Griffler, J. (2002). *World English: A study of its development*. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Cheshire, J. (Ed.). (1991). *English around the world. Sociolinguistic perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chick, K., & Wade, R. (1997). Restandardization in the direction of a New English: Implications for access and equity. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 18, 271-284.
- Coetzee-Van Rooy, A. S., & Verhoef, M. M. (2000). Perceptions of English proficiency: View from Southern Sotho speakers. *South African Journal of Linguistics*, 38, 163-185.
- Comrie, B. (1976). *Aspect. An Introduction to the study of verbal aspect and related problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dahl, O. (1985). *Tense and aspect systems*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- De Klerk, V. (1999). Black South African English: Where to from here? *World Englishes*, 18, 311-324.

- De Klerk, V., & Gough, D. (2002). Black South African English. In R. Mesthrie (Ed.), *Language in South Africa*, (pp. 356-378). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gamaroff, R. (1986). *Native language transfer in Tswana speakers' English*. Unpublished master's thesis, Potchefstroom University.
- Gamaroff, R. (1988). The problematic progressive. *English usage in Southern Africa*, 19 (2), 20-31.
- Gennrich-de Lisle, D. (1985). Theme in Conversational discourse: *Problems experienced by speakers of Black South African English, with particular reference to the role of prosody in conversational synchrony*. Unpublished master's thesis. Rhodes University.
- Gough, D. (1996). Black English in South Africa. In V. De Klerk (Ed.), *Varieties of English around the World: Focus on South Africa*. (pp. 53-77). Amsterdam: John Benjamin.
- Greenbaum, S. (1985). *The English language today*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *Functional grammar*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- House, J., & Kasper, G. (1981). Politeness markers in English and German. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), *Conversational routines*. (pp. 157-185). Hague: Mouton.
- Hundley, C. E. (1963). *Xhosa-English pronunciation in the South East-Cape*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Rhodes University.
- Jacobs, M. (1994). Consonantal variation in Zulu-English mesolect. *South African Journal of Linguistics*, 12, 16-25.
- Kachru, B. B. (1986). *The Alchemy of English*. London: Pergamon Press.
- Kachru, B. B. & Smith, L. E. (1985). Editorial. *World Englishes*, 4, 209-212.
- Kasanga, L. (2006). Requests in a South African variety of English. *World Englishes*, 25(1), 65-90.
- Kleinhenz, U., & Wissing, D. (2000). Where word-based and phrase-based languages meet. Paper presented at Linguistics at the Millennium in Southern Africa, Cape Town.
- Krashen, S.D. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. London: Longman.
- Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Lanham, L. W. (1967). *Teaching English in Bantu primary schools: Final report on research in Johannesburg schools*. Johannesburg. University of the Witwatersrand.
- Lanham, L. W. (1984). Stress and intonation and the intelligibility of South African Black English. *African Studies*, 43, 217-230.
- Makalela, L. (1998). Institutionalized Black South African English. *NAETE Journal*, 13, 58-71.
- Makalela, L. (1999). Black South African English: A dynamic variety. Unpublished Masters thesis, University of the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg
- Makalela, L. (2000, January). Black South African English and pidginization: Opposite ends? Linguistic Society of South Africa Conference, Paper presented at the University of Cape Town.
- Makalela, L. (2004). Making sense of Black South African English for linguistic democracy in South Africa. *World Englishes*, 23(3), 355-366.
- McCrum, R., Cran, W. & MacNeil, R. (1986). *The story of English*. London: Faber and Faber, BBC publications.
- Mesthrie, R. (1997). A sociolinguistic study of topicalisation phenomena in South African

- Black English. In S.W. Schneider (Ed.). *Englishes around the world*. (pp. 119-140). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Mesthrie, R. (1999). The study of new varieties of English. Unpublished manuscript.
- Meyer, C. (2002). *English corpus: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Michaelis L. A., & Gregory, M. L. (2001). Topicalization and left-dislocation: A functional opposition revisited. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33, 1665-1706.
- Mothoa, S. (2000). *Grammatical features of BSAE among Ndebele and N. Sotho first language speakers*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of the North.
- Mufwene, S. (2002, October). Colonisation styles and speciation of English. Presented at the International Association For World Englishes Conference, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Odlin, T. (1989). *Language transfer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Platt, J., Webber, H., & Ho, M.L. (1984). *The new Englishes*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Prince, E. (1981). Topicalization, focus movement and Yiddish movement: A pragmatic differentiation. *Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 7, 249-264.
- Quirk, R. (1990). Language varieties and standard language. *English Today*, 21, 3-21.
- Reichenbach, E. (1947). *Elements of symbolic logic*. New York: Macmillan.
- Rickford, J. R., & Rickford, R. J. (2000) *Spoken soul: The story of Black English*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Roodt, M. P. (1993). *Fossilization in South African Black English: An investigation*. Unpublished master's thesis, Potchefstroom University, South Africa.
- Saeed, J. I. (1997). *Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Selinker, L (1972). Interlanguage. *IRAL*, 10, 219-231.
- Schmied, J. (1991). *English in Africa*. London: Longman.
- Smitherman, G. (2000). *Talkin that talk: Language, culture and education in African America*. London: Routledge.
- Titelstad, P. (1996). English, the constitution and South Africa's language future. In V. De Klerk (Ed.). *Varieties of English around the world: Focus on South Africa*. (pp. 163-173). Amsterdam: John Benjamin
- Todd, L. (1984). *Modern Englishes: Pidgins and creoles*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Van der Walt, J., & Van Rooy, B. (2002). Toward a standard in South African Englishes. *World Englishes*, 21(1), 113-128.
- Van Rooy, B. (2000). The consonants of BSAE: Current knowledge and future prospects. *South African Journal of Linguistics*, 38, 35-54.
- Van Rooy, B. (2002). Stress placement in Tswana English: makings of a coherent system. *World Englishes*, 21, 145-160.
- Van Rooy, B. (2006). The extension of the progressive aspect in Black South African English. *World Englishes*, 25(1), 37-64.
- Van Rooy, B., & Van Huyssteen, G. B. (2000). The vowels of BSAE: Current knowledge and future prospects. *South African Journal of Linguistics*, 38, 15-33.
- Verkuyl, J. (1999). Tense, aspect and aspectual composition. *Aspectual issues: Studies on time and quantity*. Stanford University: CLSI publications.
- Wade, R. (1995). A new English for South Africa: Restandardization of South African English. *South African Journal of Linguistics*, 27, 189-202.
- Wissing, D. (2002). Black South African English: A new English? Observations from a phonetic viewpoint. *World Englishes*, 21, 129-144.

Wright, L. (1996). The standardisation question in Black South African English. In V. De Klerk (Ed.), *Varieties of English around the world: Focus on South Africa*. (pp. 149-162). Amsterdam: John Benjamin.

APPENDIX – LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUX = Auxiliary
EMPH = Emphatic
EXP = Explicit
HAB = Habitual
NAR = Narrative
NEG = Negation
PRES = Present
PROG = Progressive
PRON = Pronoun
PST = Past
SM1 = Subject Marker of Nouns in Class number 1.
SM2 = Subject marker of nouns in class 2.

Leketi Makalela is the Department Chair of English Studies at the University of Limpopo, South Africa. His research interests include New Englishes, language planning, and composition. He has published in several journals including *World Englishes* and *Written Communication*. He is also the co-editor of a TESOL book series: *Language Teacher Research in Africa*.