Towards a norm in South African Englishes: the case for Xhosa English

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Abstract

Black South African English (BSAE) is generally regarded today as 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. Its roots lie in the history of the teaching of English to the black people of this country, where the role models who teach English are second language learners themselves. To date, BSAE has mainly been studied within an applied linguistic framework with emphasis on its character as a second language which is deviant from standard English. An alternative view is to see it as a variety in its own right, a new or world English (Coetsee- van Rooy and Verhoef 2000; van der Walt and van Rooy 2002). As a consequence, a new look at norms is becoming increasingly necessary, so that decisions about learners= language competence can be made in terms of this variety. This paper reports on preliminary analyses of a recently collected corpus of Xhosa English (XE) (a sub-category of BSAE) which consists of naturalistic spoken data, and comprises some 540,000 words of Xhosa English. This large database enables empirical analysis of actual patterns of use in language, making it possible to test earlier speculations which have been based on intuition, and to explore the possibility of systematic differences in the patterns of structure and use in this particular variety. The paper focusses on 20 separate linguistic characteristics, most of which have been previously identified in the literature as being features of BSAE, and analyses each of them in turn, in order to ascertain their usage patterns and frequency of occurrence in the corpus.

1.   Introduction

Black South African English (BSAE) is generally regarded today as 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. It is also commonly referred to as a >new= English, whose roots lie in the history of the teaching of English to the black people of this country, where the role models through whom English is taught to most learners in South Africa are second language learners whose norms and practices generate the kind of English that is transmitted. The label Black South African English has been hotly debated (Van Rooy 2000, p. ii), because of its unfortunate associations with South Africa=s

apartheid history with its tendency to label race and ethnicity. The term nevertheless is efficient in making explicit the geographical location of the particular varieties which it encompasses, and acknowledges BSAE as a recognisably different form of South African English which has developed alongside other South African Englishes. As van Rooy puts it (2000, p. ii) Awhile we do not deny the similarities between BSAE and other forms of African English ... it is more fruitful to regard BSAE ... within its South African context, before it is regarded in its larger African context. He also points out that the word ABlack@, while potentially derogatory, has acquired more positive connotations since the Black Consciousness movement, and seems a more attractive option than ABantu@, which, while it would be linguistically more accurate, carries even more unfortunate negative overtones.

Defining BSAE is a question which deserves serious consideration (de Klerk 2002a and b), since there are striking differences in competence among BSAE speakers, ranging from complete fluency (with English a >second first language=) to minimal levels of proficiency, limited to a few very rudimentary formulaic phrases. Mesthrie (1999) terms such minimal forms of this variety a basilang rather than a basilect, in that it lacks fluency, and is used out of necessity, usually in a work domain, without community sanction. Because many speakers of African languages encounter very little English of any kind, it could be argued that on the whole they do not speak a recognisable variety of BSAE, but that each individual arrives at a different stage on a learner-language continuum (de Kadt, 1993, p. 31; Mugoya, 1991; Gough 1996, p. 54). Using this line of argument, the idea of a single uniform variety of BSAE would thus seem to be an optimistic figment of the linguistic imagination.

Even more problematic is the fact that to date, descriptions of BSAE have been somewhat sketchy and impressionistic, and the existing information about the characteristics or properties of Black South African English is very restricted and has its roots in a prescriptive approach in which the variety is compared with the standard. However many scholars in recent years have noted emerging norms of Black South African English (e.g Wade 1995, Chick & Wade 1997. De Klerk (1999, p. 317) notes the growing status of Black South African English as a result of the democratisation of South Africa and predicts that it will become a valid institutionalised variety of English.

To date, BSAE has mainly been studied within an applied linguistic framework with emphasis on its character as a second language, particularly in an educational context (Gough

1996, p. 7; de Klerk and Gough 2002), as deviant from standard English. An alternative view is to see Black South African English as a variety in its own right, a new or world English (see also Coetsee- an Rooy and Verhoef 2000; van der Walt and van Rooy 2002). While we need to acknowledge the tension that currently exists between Astandard@ South African English, to which many black speakers of English aspire (Sarinjeve 1999; Coetsee van Rooy and Verhoef 2000; van der Walt and van Rooy 2002), we also need to take note of the newly evolving standards within varieties of BSAE. But until we have comprehensive and reliable descriptions of the latter, linguists will not be in a position to reach any authoritative conclusions about the status and standard of BSAE. The space for investigation of lexical and grammatical properties of BSAE remains largely unchartered (van Rooy 2000, p. iii), and this article aims to make some small contributions in this area.

There are two factors which account for the extreme heterogeneity of BSAE: firstly, it is a second language and its speakers will have varying levels of competence, and secondly there are a range of first languages to be considered (Smit 2000, p. 135). In addition, given recent drastic political changes, Apreviously established social groups have lost their sharp boundaries, and the speakers of BSAE have started to take up the political and social majority position they have always had numerically@ (Smit 2000, p. 135). This is bound to have an impact on attitudes: alongside the very positive attitudes to standard English, Aa more specific question must be raised about the role and position of BSAE within the linguistic ecology of South Africa languages and South African English@ (van Rooy et al. 2000, p. 188).

2.   **One BSAE or many sub-types?**

Roux and Louw (2000, p. 7) draw attention to the Aserious debate on whether BSAE is a monolithic entity or whether distinct varieties based on the mother-tongue of the speaker may be identified@ on a phonological level. Van Rooy and van Huysteen (2000) also touch on the question of Awhether there are various forms of BSAE related to the individual mother tongues of the speakers, or perhaps some kind of General Nguni-English or General Sotho-English@ (2000, p. 16). The usual compromise (which they adopt in their article) is to refer to BSAE generically in cases where there is apparent convergence and to refer to more specific forms, such as Tswana English or Zulu English in cases where evidence for convergence is lacking or contradictory.

Such blurring of important distinctions is unfortunate, and this applies to all levels of linguistic analysis, not just the phonetic. de Klerk (2002a and b) puts forward a proposal for a new approach to corpus studies in which researchers aim for an even finer differentiation within BSAE: while BSAE includes all South Africans who speak a Bantu language as first language and who probably learned English from BSAE-speaking teachers, there are in fact 9 different official indigenous Bantu languages in South Africa, and although these form 4 clusters or groups (Sotho, Nguni, etc) whose members share some characteristics, the language groups themselves differ quite significantly. Given the low levels of English competence and tuition in the country, and the localised and isolated nature of many linguistic communities, who do not necessarily have contact with each other or have radio or TV, it is natural to assume that different varieties of BSAE have evolved along slightly different lines in different areas, based on a shared MT, and shared local values and traditions. To lump all these Englishes together as BSAE from the start would, I believe, be unwise, since linguists would run the risk of overlooking any salient differences which might exist between them. Linguists need an approach which carefully distinguishes speakers of English on the basis of their background MT, ethnicity and geographical location. For this reason, a separate corpus of the spoken English of Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape has been collected, and forms the basis of the analyses reported in this article.

3.   **The need for Norms**

More than a decade ago, Ndebele (1987) foresaw the need to recognise changing norms in order to account for constant lexical and grammatical shifts in English, resulting from the proximity between English and local African languages (Van der Walt 2001, p. 3). Ten years later, Ayo Bamgbose (1998) called for urgent re- codification in order to endorse newly established norms in new Englishes, and to counteract the constant pull between native and non-native English norms. In his view, one of the major factors militating against the emergence of endonormative standards in non-native Englishes is Aprecisely the dearth of codification@ (Bamgbose 1998, p. 4). As he puts it Ato insists on native variety feature norms is to negate the very existence of non-native varieties, since many of the linguistic features likely to be stigmatised by comparison with native English are the very indexical markers of the non-native varieties@ (1998, p. 3). Because of problems relating to the very prescriptive nature of teachers and other linguistic gatekeepers who usually decide on such norms, he

argues for codification and authoritative decision-making by empirical descriptive linguists who can report on demographic aspects of usage and attitudes to such innovations

Van der Walt (2001) also argues that a new look at norms is becoming increasingly necessary, and argues that decisions about learners= language competence should be made on empirical evidence of the stability of such features, so that language assessment in future is able to take Standard BSAE into account, as the extent and influence of indigenised nativised Englishes grow. He cautions, however, that Aadequate data are necessary before any decisions regarding testing can be taken@ (Van der Walt (2001, p. 1).

As he points out, tests must be normative, but the question of a norm needs to take into account the fact that language is constantly changing, that languages comprise a range of dialectal forms and that the dialect of the powerful or elite group is usually viewed as the norm (Van der Walt 2001, p. 2; see also Myers-Scotton 1993). This idealised form disadvantages other sub-groups in society, increasing the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Wolfram and Christian (1980, p. 170 cited in Van der Walt 2001, p. 2) contend that high failure rates stem from a bias in test methods rather than differences in ability, based crucially on unjustifiable notions of correctness, which make certain dialectal forms more legitimate than others. Because of the current discrepancy between linguistic norms and behaviour, it is becoming increasingly important to reassess these norms, taking into account newly nativised features of BSAE, so that they also be considered as possible norms for English usage and teaching. As he puts it, AAt issue here is not language deficit but rather language difference@ (Van der Walt (2001, p. 2). One nevertheless has to recognize the force of counter-arguments to this position (e.g. Wright 1996; Titlestadt 1996) which critique it on the grounds of its inherent social irresponsibility, interpreting efforts purporting to respect non-standard dialects as potentially patronising. In similar vein, Greenbaum and Mbali (2002, p. 237) make the point that the legal profession Acannot accommodate a variety of Englishes (including Black English regardless of what features linguists have identified as >stable=)@ if this leads to misunderstanding and lack of clarity, as would be the case if inconsistencies in tense usage and article usage were permitted.

Despite such cautionary views, in recent years, South African scholars have increasingly focussed on the need to find empirical evidence of the standardness of such features, rather than impressionistic or anecdotal evidence. For example, both Van der Walt (2001) and Van der Walt and Van Rooy (2002) report the results of follow-up studies of a

grammaticality judgement task designed by Roodt (1993) of 52 sentences, of which 32 contained common BSAE features. Van der Walt surveyed 525 third-year English university students in the North West Provence and Gauteng, and reports a Alarge effect size@ (features accepted by over 75% of all subjects) for indefinite articles (*a courage*), omission of articles, the use of *other ... other*, *some + few*, non count nouns as count (*advices),* various unique prepositional features, and use of the phrase *my first time*. He reports medium effect size (+65%- 74) for the following phrases or constructions: *many homeworks, somebody* (=person), *discuss about*, *is having*, *to make a party*, *likes it too much* (= very) and problems with concord in *if one smoke*. All these items he regards as Aentrenched@ (2001, p. 5), and therefore worthy of inclusion as new nativised norms.

Other commonly identified characteristics, such as determiner confusion (*the good dancer*), gender confusion in pronouns, resumptive pronouns, overuse of *did* as a redundant tense carrier (*did asked*), regularisation (*cutted*), and distinctive uses of the past participle (*been fatally wounded, have decide*) revealed a small size effect (50% - 64) and therefore were seen to be not as worthy of reassessment as the other features.

Following this study, Van der Walt and Van Rooy (2002, p. 122) set up a project to find out what teachers, who are the gatekeepers and main transmitters of norms, regard as the norm for teaching English in second language classrooms. They also aimed to find out whether teachers applied this norm consistently and to consider the effect of the norm on the linguistic behaviour of learners. Alongside some conflict in teachers= views and a lack of consensus about their own behaviour, which suggests that learners are confronted with different models in class, they report high levels of acceptance of many of these features by 60 black teachers and 670 black college students. This is strong evidence that those who wield authority (at least in the schools in which these teachers teach English), and those who will, in the future, wield authority (as potential graduates), concur about the acceptability of a high number of features which would be regarded as non-standard from an exonormative point of view. Increasingly the linguistic features attributed to the group in power are likely to attract attention, gain momentum and hold sway. Ultimately, if sufficiently widespread, these features are likely to find acceptance. As van der Walt puts it, Ain a democratised South Africa, blacks, the majority, hold political power, [and] their educated usage consequently possesses a certain authority@ (2001, p. 5) .

4.   The study

This article reports on preliminary analysis of a corpus of Xhosa English (XE). Given the non-formal nature of this variety (it is, for example, controversial to claim that BSAE resides in the written mode at all), the corpus (in its current form) focuses on naturalistic spoken data from 299 speakers, and comprises some 540,000 words of Xhosa English, comprising 263 samples (of approximately 2000 running words each), made up largely of private dialogue, with a small component of unscripted monologue as well (see de Klerk (2002a) for further details).[1]

Such a corpus falls far short of the 5 million of other, more ambitious corpora, but it should nevertheless be broadly representative of the focus community, as opposed to representing a few arbitrary idiolects. In defence of its modest initial size (and it needs to be remembered that corpora, by design, are built on and grow), McCarthy (1998) argues strongly in favour of smaller, carefully constructed sample corpora of spoken material which contain authentic and reliable representative data, and can be analysed exhaustively in a variety of ways. This large database of naturally-occurring discourse enables empirical analysis of actual patterns of use in language, enabling us to test earlier speculations which have been based on intuition, and to explore the possibility of systematic differences in the patterns of structure and use in this particular variety.

This article therefore focusses on 20[2] separate linguistic characteristics, most of which have been previously identified in the literature as being features of BSAE, and analyses each of them in turn, in order to ascertain their usage patterns and frequency of occurrence in the corpus.

5.   **Results:**

1.   Resumptive pronouns

The use of resumptive pronouns in relative clauses (e.g. *my mother who you know her*) and pronoun copying (e.g. *my mother she ...*) is an example of a clarity-linked principle of maximising salience. (The latter structures can also be seen as topic-comment structures with pronominal apposition). These structures have been regularly reported in many new institutionalised varieties of English (Nigeria: Bamgbose 1982; Singapore: Williams 1987, p. 190), although Bamiro (1995, p. 197) refers to such constructions as Adouble subjects@, reserving resumptive pronouns for such structures as *they were no longer sharp, the cracks*. Seen as one of the most prototypical features of BSAE, and remarked on in most accounts of BSAE (e.g. Gough 1994, 1996, Mesthrie 1997, Wade 1995), this construction was accepted

by 58% of the students and rejected by 70% of the teachers in van der Walt and van Rooy (2002) as non-standard. They therefore regard the feature as in flux, and not sufficiently entrenched to be regarded as a feature of BSAE at this stage.

The corpus, however, yielded very high numbers of the structure, as exemplified below, including642 appositive uses of *they* alone (including 221 instances of Apeople they@), 37 appositive uses of *she* and 104 appositive uses of *he (it* was not analysed). On these grounds, it would probably be safe to assume that the use of pronouns to perform this emphatic topicalising function is a strongly characteristic feature of XE, as exemplified below:

* *People they* steal, they use some securities like us like police, you see
* most of the people who live in that area most of *them they* like they attend church
* and in that time *the kids they* are still watching television
* ja because *some people they* got maybe
* my great *my stepfather he* was angry
* and *Mr Mandela he* had friends like Raymond Mhlaba

2. *Extended use of the progressive*

Regularisation of the verbal system, such as the use of the progressive with non-stative verbs in the present tense has been remarked on by most commentators on BSAE (Buthelezi 1995, Gough 1996, p. 61), and Williams (1987, p. 173) provides examples from Englishes in Kenya, Cameroon, India and Malaysia while Arua Arua (1998) gives examples from Swazi English. Van der Walt et al. (2002, p. 121) state that Athere seem to be clear grounds to accept the stabilisation of the extended function of the progressive... as [a] feature of a new BSAE standard@. In van der Walt et al. (2002), 89% of teachers and 64% of learners accepted constructions like >is having standard 8'. In the corpus there were 625 uses of *I=m V-ing*, which is a relatively high frequency, and of particular interest are the 34 instances of the progressive with stative verbs in the corpus. These frequencies tend to confirm the view, expressed very frequently, that the progressive is used more extensively in BSAE than in standard English. The following extracts from the corpus exemplify its use:

* okay like eh *I=m growing up* with a family doing customs now *I=m accepting* myself to be a kid of jesus and being saved by him
* because even today you may go to a newspaper *seeing an advert* eh *having a vacancy* you may find out *they more preferring people* who *are having skills* on computers
* I=m still a learner ja but *I=m having* a child you see ja because now our our parents they *are not sitting us they are not sitting down* with us ja you see *they are waiting* for the age of eighteen eighteen then *they are starting to tell* us about sex. What you must

do, you have to look after yourself. It=s already damage there ja ja you you are already then ja you see, okay, so they are failing *they are failing* to teach us those things what to do about our lives you see

*   I can say because *I=m believing* in them so
*   okay here I think *I=m blaming* womens about that
*   nineteen ninety six so *I=m depending* to that
*   which sometimes *I=m fearing* that it leads to
*   I can't hate you if *I=m hating* you I must
*   I mean okay at this point *I=m having* two points
*   I=m still a learner ja but *I=m having* a child you see
*   actually *I=m preferring* to conserve

3.   Overgeneralising the plural ending on plural nouns:

The fact that there were 67 cases of overgeneralisation of the plural suffix, regardless of whether the noun was already plural, suggests a strong shift in favour of a standard -*s* ending to mark number, as is evident from the following examples:

*   you don't have qualities of looking for *other peoples* that is not quite good
*   I think I=m blaming *womens* about this type of thing
*   but I don=t think those adopted *childrens* could be loved
*   but nowadays simply because now this young *mens* are complaining
*   also one thing I heard that the caterers they are all *womens* only two or three
*   and domestic animals even here in grahamstown like donkeys cows goats and *sheeps*
*   that=s where we throw our *rubbishes* you know eh
*   you know uh you get to the bush and collect some *woods*
*   the people who are going there just to have boyfriends or to go to have *intercourses*

4.   Conflation of demonstrative pronouns

Van der Walt et al. (2002) report high stability and acceptance of the conflation of demonstrative pronouns by both teachers and learners. While phonological similarity might explain this to some extent in the case of proximate demonstratives (*this/thes*e), the coalescence of the remote demonstrative pronouns (*that/those*) is less easily explained, although extension by analogy could conceivably be taking place (van Rooy and van Huysteen 2000). The corpus yielded 40 cases of *[that + plural N]* and 68 cases of [*this + plural N*]. There were 90 cases of *[those + singular N]* (43 of these were A*those kind*@), and 29 instances of [*these + singular N*], which suggests a strong tendency to coalesce these words in BSAE.

*   because they use cars to steal take *that goods* away
*   After your father died all *that things* must left for you he is going to *leave that things* for you so you must also keep an eye for *that things*

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*   *That things* is happen maybe he he was raped by his father
*   experiments and *all that things* we don=t we didn=t have it
*   so they live with the pension *this children* are getting
*   they are pushing like *that agendas*
*   end of the year but in *that days* um I was in
*   how did you get out of *that drugs*
*   honestly hurt about *that guys* ooh it's such
*   I don't even have *that marks* you know

5. *Verbal concord*

The tendency to simplify standard concord rules is a frequently remarked-on feature of BSAE, and of nativised varieties of English more generally (see Williams 1987, Gough 1996, p. 61). Van der Walt (2002, p. 123) report that teachers corrected fewer than 50% of such structures, and 70% of the learners in their study accepted >if one smoke=. While a comprehensive search of the corpus will have to be the subject of a separate paper, there were 66 cases in which *I=m* was used regardless of tense or concord rules, and 18 instances of concord errors involving *they*, some of which are cited below:

*   yes Sipho I=m I=m *I=m agree* with you but
*   The whole day of Saturday *I=m been* in church
*   *I=m came* from Middledrif
*   you see *I=m decide* to leave the
*   um *I=m depend* on one parent
*   such a thing like that *I=m disagree* with this a
*   not doing that because *I=m got* no money
*   that's why *I=m say* black people do
*   okay they get you know *they gets* taxes from
*   to give him a name *they goes* there to give
*   once he's been healed *they goes* there they are
*   and so on oh they *they knows* ways of playing
*   they going to do after *they was* old and go to

6. *Overgeneralisation in the use of quantifiers:*

Uniquely characteristic usage of quantifiers has also been identified as gaining increasing acceptance in BSAE (Gough 1996, p. 63), and a high number of learners in Van der Walt (2002, p. 124) accepted such patterns (*other ... other* 82%, *some + few* 72%, *too* (=very) *much* 71%). The corpus contained 67 instances of *other ...other*, 33 instances of *very much* being used as an intensifier instead of *very*, 17 cases of the use of t*oo much* instead of the intensifier *too* or *very much*, 10 instances of *some few* (often with no plural marker on N), 13

usages of *more* as an adjective with preceding determiner, 3 occurrences of *the most thing,*
and 3 of *a much (adj) N.* In addition, there were 43 cases in which *some* was used
inappropriately, usually by omitting the concord on a count noun, or by using *a some*. These
statistics are therefore symptomatic of a growing trend towards acceptance of such patterns
as those listed below:

* *the other* one is Venda *the other* one is Tsonga
* the people are saying then it=s v- it=s *very much difficult*
* even pregnancy amongst schoolchildren is *very much common* in our days
* what is happening in zimbabwe is *very much ah disgusting*
* you need to be *very much careful* especially in handling your visitors
* I will feel *very much excited* because now at high school I'm feeling very bored
* because they are *too much romantic*
* they have to bring eh *some few bottles* of brandy to the bush you see
* he would go you know to the location and have *some few drinks* and
* is a small town maybe we got ah maybe *some few funeral parlour*
* like sometimes you know take *some few kids* from the location
* that is why they they got *a more stress*
* okay uh the blacks has *a more land* than the whites
* is it still the same thing just done in *a more different* way
* if you solve problem physically you making *a more problem*
* Spending *the more money* in girls and boys equally
* There=s *a much contribution* from the churches
* In our community more especially black community there=s *a much lack* of moral, there is a low moral in the community
* they used *some blanket* as well
* even they put there *some box* in the street
* they should get *some bucket* of water an
* there were *some couple* of invitation
* I've got *some couple* of friends
* they supposed to pay *some little amount* of money
* I do get *a some little bit* of pocket money
* at present we've got *some little eh funds* available
* you must read *some magazine* in order
* for instance there are *some reason* that
* and I'm just having *some rickets*
* the government have got *a some contribution*
* here at Rhodes actually *the most thing* that I enjoy
* because that's *the most thing*, but what
* oh I think *the most thing* is that

7.   *Overgeneralisation of past tense*

The use of past participles to mark tense already marked on the main verb (e.g *she did look; did asked*) is seen as a means to achieve maximum salience by adopting a one-to-one

correspondence between meaning and form, using an analytic approach, especially in the tense-aspect-modality system (see Platt et al. 1984). Williams (1987, p. 184) notes its frequent occurrence in new institutionalised varieties of English, and Arua Arua (1998, p. 145) identifies this as a strong feature of Swazi English[3]. This pattern also received considerable acceptance by both teachers and learners (59%) in South Africa (Van der Walt (2002)). The corpus yielded 78 cases of [*did + V*] (excluding those instances in which context revealed that such a construction was deliberately used for emphasis (e.g. ADid you really go? Yes, I honestly *did go*@). Several of these contained additional past tense inflections on the verb (e.g *did came*). This structure may result from simple ignorance of the appropriate inflected form of the verb in question, so could also be seen as a type of avoidance, resulting in over-generalisation, but it is nevertheless worth noting as a fairly significant feature of XE.

* yes yes what I *did also regret* is that
* yes I was speaking there I *did apologize* for the learner
* but he *did attend* the evening
* then I can say that am if I *did born* again
* uh they come they *did came* last year
* but last year ja ja they *did come* then they collected
* ja even you *did even attended*
* but this year they *did do* those shows okay
* back to the community and *did give back* what we
* also very nervous but I *did handle* it because
* because ja the police they *did make* a statement

A search on AI=ve@ revealed a very limited reliance on Ahave@ to carry the past tense, with 8 cases (out of 455) in which the regular unmarked form for past participle was used(e.g. *I=ve see*) and 23 (out of 3789) with Ahave@ (e.g. *have decide*). This is a very low incidence, which suggests that these could be regarded as errors rather than a characteristic XE construction, despite the fact that Van der Walt found that 53% of scholars accepted such a construction.

* that's what I can say *I=ve enjoy* myself
* just like what *I=ve see I=ve see* last last
* *I=ve see* joe's there or *I=ve see* stan is there
* this screw *I=ve take* it out here and
* some boys when they *have complete* their
* that means you *have gain* a lot
* I *have get* a better job
* because we we *have involve* with that

The corpus also revealed a fairly strong tendency to use the past participle *been* (as in *AI been fatally wounded@*) as a general past tense marker. Of the 600 instances of Abeen@ in the corpus, there were 76 such instances, several of which might possibly be a phonetic equivalent of A*being*@.

*   I *been* here for five years
*   why will you not come? I *been told* you in time
*   you *are been given* chickens there
*   when you *are been born* again
*   things that *are been established*
*   and also the fingos *been involve* there
*   the whole day of saturday *I'm been* in church
*   I think of myself *been paying* something
*   townships *were never been developed* because

Of the 6018 verbs ending in *-ed*, there were only 26 instances of inappropriate regularisation of past tense (*betted, builded, broadcasted, casted, catched, chosed, overcomed, costed, cutted digged, drunked, feeded, fighted, forgived, growed, haved , quitted, setted, taked , teached, telled*). So although 56% of van der Walt et al=s (2002) students accepted A*cutted*@, it would probably be unwise to regard general past tense regularisation of verbs as characteristic of XE. Irregular verbs such as *thought* (129), *took* (109), *grew (50), bought (40), stole* (20) and *threw* (4), were correctly used in the corpus.

8.   Loss of the distinction between mass and count nouns:
The coalescence between mass and count nouns has long been recognised as a feature of new Englishes (see Williams 1987, p. 171 for examples from Englishes in Kenya, Cameroon, India and Malaysia), and by BSAE researchers (e.g. Gough 1996, p. 61). It also emerged as commonly accepted among a high proportion of teachers and learners in van der Walt et al. (2002) (*many good advices* 73%, *many homeworks* 65%). In the corpus, attempts to regularise the rules relating to whether nouns are inherently mass nouns or count nouns were numerous, evident both in the inappropriate use of determiners with these nouns, the omission of determiners with count nouns and the use of inappropriate quantifiers. The first set of evidence for this comes from the fact that the corpus contained a fair number of plurals for non-count nouns (e.g. *(home)works* (13), *equipments* (5), *moneys* (5), *advices* (5)) as shown below:
*   using *some equipments* and for french we didn=t have *those equipments*

*   and give them *advices* about their hair and skin
*   they ask for *big moneys* couple of thousand
*   what about uh pocket moneys don't they give you any

Secondly, the use of *a* and *the* with non-count nouns was fairly frequent in the corpus (e.g. *corruption* (20), *education* (40), *research* (8), *flu* (5), *sex* (5), *in a good condition* (4), and *work* (3))

*   hence we say okay in South Africa we don=t want that kind of the situation. Let the whites and the blacks be together so that the blacks can not do *a corruption* then the whites can not do *a corruption*.
*   at least there is *a communication* because he listen what his child is saying
*   so you=ve got already *an information*
*   do you believe that *the education* is the key to success?
*   at university we are making *a research* here okay

A further source of evidence of this conflation comes from the use of *too much* instead of *too many* with count nouns:

*   the youth using *too much drugs*
*   ja it yes there is a *too much criminal*
*   in Riebeeck East there are not *too much people*
*   there are *too much sports* here
*   our taxis haven't got *too much overloads*
*   there is *a too much criminal* in in the festival
*   there are *too much sports* here in Grahamstown: soccer netball cricket

9.   Omission and insertion of inappropriate articles

Gough (1996, p. 61) and van der Walt and van Rooy (2002, p. 120) point to the use of articles in patterns which are different from standard English usage as steadily gaining recognition in BSAE. Greenbaum and Mbali (2002, p. 241) also provide interesting examples of misused determiners (e.g. AStudents of the Indian origin@; Asuffered the unfair discrimination@; Aif they could change a university policy@). Both inappropriate omission and insertion of such articles were accepted by the majority of teachers and by high numbers of the students in Van der Walt et al (2002) (^ *health risk* 82%, *a courage* 75%, *the good dancer* 53%). The corpus search yielded a fairly high frequency of such usage patterns, which tends to confirm this trend. There were 76 instances of the use of *a* regardless of number concord (see examples below), 114 cases of overlooking the need to inflect *a* to *an* before a vowel (e.g. *a opposition party; a organisation; a inner zone; a untidy; a idea; a evening*), and 32 cases of the use of *a* before a number or quantifier (e.g. *a one* (16); *a two* (5); *a five* (3), *a some* (4) etc.). There

were also many cases of missing determiners where they would be expected (*death penalty (13)*, *accident* (5)), and many instances of generalising the use of *the* for non-referential purposes:

* this is one of the thing that sometimes *it cause accident*
* to train them as *a bricklayers*
* I don=t know I don=t know this is *a rumours* you know
* really I fear those around i- it would just be *a rumours*
* when we have a national club.it=s it=s to fund raise something like *a charities*
* you can develop something to that sort of a pro- project to build *a cups* and so on
* There was *a food* there, there was *a drinks* there, so there=s a lot
* I=m *the vegetarian* because I=m afraid of high blood pressure
* I=m *the south african* I have the right to built here mm I'm I wrong or right
* I'm *the unemployed person* here in south africa
* he was *the member* of the a n c and he was the in the government
* you are look like a someone who also like to help *the peoples*
* yes , I=m I=m *the handsome guy* I like I like everybody I can=t hate you
* if they got the *the problem* just like *the accident* and so on

10.   Gender conflation in pronouns

Several researchers have noted some confusion in regard to English pronominal gender marking in BSAE (Gough 1996, p. 62) because of the lack of parallel gender marking in African languages. Although this feature would need careful analysis in a corpus of this nature, in order to check each context of utterance, one reliable clue to its existence is the fact that speakers frequently switched pronouns while speaking, indicating a high level of uncertainty as to which pronoun was correct. There were 70 examples of confusion between *he/she* or *her/him* or the reverse in the corpus (e.g. A*martina hingis but he she held on still*@) and 35 cases of speakers actually saying A*he or she*@ - which would arguably be fairly marked in the ordinary conversation of MT speakers. However, further analysis will be necessary before one can ascertain whether such gender conflation is a more integral part of XE.

11.   Neutralisation of the contrast between adjectives and adverbs

Lack of *-ly* as an adverbial ending (e.g. *he walked quick*) is seen by van der Walt et al. (2002, p. 121) as another fairly uncontroversial feature of standard BSAE, in light of the fact that teachers and learners did not correct forms which lacked this ending. However, exploration of the usage patterns for adverbials ending in *-ly* in the corpus yielded 3708 instances of *correct*

adverbial usage, and only a very small proportion (fewer than 20) of adverbs missing this ending (e.g. Åbut sometimes it comes *quick* at Port Elizabeth ...@). It would therefore seem that this is not a notable feature of XE, and adverbs are typically being formed in the standard way.

12.   *Neutralisation of the contrast between A-self@ and A-selves@ in reflexives.*

Van der Walt et al. (2002) reported mixed responses from teachers to non-standard usage of these forms (learners reactions were not investigated), suggesting that change is underway as far as this construction is concerned. However, of the 564 instances of the use of *-self* and the 236 of *-selves* in the corpus, only 12 were inappropriate in terms of number concord, which suggests that there is nothing significant to report in this regard, since overall, the standard is being fairly closely followed. Nevertheless there is some evidence that the case marking of such reflexives might be more problematic, since the possessive or genitive form (*theirselves*) was used 22 times, following the analogy of *myself* and *herself*, where the standard variety would use the accusative *themselves* (only one use of *hisself* was self-corrected to *himself*).

*   have protection to protect *themself* at the clinic the
*   are not forward with *themself* they they they
*   they must try to commit *themself* also to church
*   important to to to protect *ourself* in more about aid
*   think they must protect *theirself* to h i v
*   have integrity for *theirselves* I don't know
*   expressing *theirself theirselves* telling the people
*   ladies are proud of *theirselves* in our days
*   people enjoying *theirselves* you know

13.   *Distinctive use of Prepositions.*

Prepositional usage patterns are in considerable flux in BSAE, and most researchers have remarked on this fact. Greenbaum and Mbali (2002, p. 239) comment on the wide range of errors which law students make with prepositions with high frequency in legal language (e.g. *>based by=). Similarly, the teachers in van der Walt et al. (2002) failed to correct a fairly high number of phrases which would be seen as non-standard, and high proportions of the learners in their study accepted such phrases as correct (e.g. *cheered up* (84%), *fill many forms* (75%), *in radio (*71%), *discuss about* (70%)). Analysis of the XE corpus revealed similar large numbers of idiosyncratic prepositional usage, but individual frequencies for each of the thousands of possible combinations were understandably low. While the details of

particular patterns will have to be the subject of a separate investigation, it is interesting to note some features of four selected prepositions: *about*, *around*, *of* and *up*. What the analysis reveals is a lack of consistency in usage, amounting to confusion and uncertainty among speakers as to which preposition is appropriate. While there were a few repeated patterns, which have been noted below, none of these are sufficiently widely used in the corpus to warrant a claim that they are clear features of XE.

13.1   About:

Out of a total frequency of 3177 instances of *about* (excluding repetitions), 219 were non-standard. Apart from many one-off >odd= usages (e.g. *equipped about, perform about, judge about*), the following patterns occurred at least 2 times:

discuss about (13)	Satisfied about (10)
mention about (8)	promise about (7)
problem about (7)	comment about (5)
start about (4)	are debating about (3)
interested about (3)	pray about (=to) (3)
research about (3)	confirm about (2)
investigate about (2)	thank about (2)
vote about (2)	

13.2   Around:

Excluding repetitions, *around* was used 382 times in the corpus, of which 42 could be regarded as unusual. In most cases, the more appropriate preposition would have been *about*:

beat around the bush (3)	tell / say around (3)
agreement around (2)	your view around this (2)
honest around (2)	

13.3   Of:

Altogether *of* was used 6378 times (excluding repetitions). Of these, some 236 usages could be regarded as non-standard, most of which were one-off oddities *(due of, need of, bored of, reason of, taught of ourselves, have a look of this problem)*. The following repeated phrases should be noted:

opportunity of (7)	need of (6)
money of (5)	place of (5)
against of (4)	bored of (4)
corruption of (3)	information of (3)
instant of (3)	look of (3)
payment of (3)	responsible of (3)
cure of (2)	plans of (2)
pride of (2)	

13.4   Up:

Up was used 718 times, and 36 of these usages would be classified as non-standard. Most of these uses were redundant, in that no preposition was required at all. Expressions used more than once include the following:

raise up (5) (= raise)	grow (me) up (4) (= raise)
cover up (3) (= complete)	make up (3) (= cause / bring about)
fill up the form (2)	form up (2) (= form)
cope up (2)	

*14.   A*Maybe*@ used to express conditional modality*

Maybe is used standardly in many new Englishes to express conditional modality in a salient, lexicalised way (Williams 1987). Altogether it was used 1634 times in the corpus, which is a remarkably high frequency. By way of comparison, in the spoken portion of the New Zealand English corpus (approximately 440000 words, so a fairly similar size to the XE corpus) the word *maybe* is used only 215 times. Of particular interest is the fact that 62 times it was used in combination with *if* to perform this function in the XE corpus (see examples below), but *if maybe* occurs only 5 times in the New Zealand spoken corpus.

*   coming up with an idea *if maybe* I don't get employment
*   to you if you just ignore *if maybe* you dream like
*   stadium eh I don't know *maybe if* you have seen

*15.   A*Can be able*@ as a modal verb*

Gough (1996, p. 63) remarks on this as a feature of BSAE, in which, again possibly for purposes of salience, redundancy is built into the phrase, in order to express the epistemic function of ability. The phrase does not occur at all in the New Zealand corpus, and, in contrast, it occurs 14 times in the XE corpus. It would therefore seem that *can* alone (without *be able*) is reserved to express deontic permission, and is clearly disambiguated from the epistemic function.

*   so that the bank *can be able* to assist
*   so that I *can be able* to tell
*   because it *can be able* to show
*   then municipality *can be able* now to build
*   this way the newspaper *can be able* to come up
*   these illiterate people now *can be able* to translate
*   then they *can be able* to walk
*   so that you *can be able* to compete

16.   Use of an invariant tag question:

Although the usual invariant tag question *A*not so?*@*, which is regularly identified as a feature

of many new English varieties was not used at all in the XE corpus, in its place, there was a fairly high frequency (258 occurrences) of the particle *né*, borrowed from Afrikaans and very commonly used in South African English to perform the same function as the tag question Α*isn=t that so?*@, inviting the assent and participation of the listener. Serving a similar function, were two other highly formulaic tags: *you know* (used 3570 times) and *you see* (used 1296 times).

17.   Use of Α*my first time*@

Van der Walt et al. (2002) note the general acceptance of the phrase *my first time* by75% of their learner informants. Of the 74 instances of *first time* in the corpus, 31 occurrences were preceded by *my/your*, a high proportion, indicative of a well- entrenched expression. In contrast, *first time* only occurs with *the* in the NZ corpus.

*   it was *my first time* I heard about
*   as I=ve said it was *my first time* I enjoyed it
*   [was] that *your first time* to go to Johannesburg
*   what do you say about your first time at rhodes
*   tell me about *your first time* at school

*18.   Use of Α*each and every*@*
Used 56 times as a unit in the corpus by a wide range of speakers discussing a wide range of topics, it is clear that this formulaic expression, probably originating in order to serve as a marker of salience and redundancy, has entrenched itself into XE, e.g.

*   to take part you know *each and every* young person
*   I would like to to know *each and every* every child
*   so that I can learn *each and every* thing
*   so that at least *each and every* morning

19.   *Use of Α*by all means*@ to mean Α*try our hardest /best*@*
This phrase has not emerged in previous work on BSAE, but the fact that it occurred 17 times in the corpus makes it worthy of inclusion as a distinctive and possibly characteristic feature of XE, especially in view of the fact that the phrase does not occur at all in the New Zealand English corpus.

I always *try by all means* to praise
and *try by all means* to ask
inside at home then he *try by all means* to explain
I would like to say that let's *try by all our best*
think the females must *try by all means* to avoid

19

for you you must *try by all means* to fulfil

20.   Generalisation of structures of comparison:

The corpus yielded 25 out of 294 occurrences of incorrect structures of comparison (a rate of 8%), mentioned by Gough (1996, p. 62) as a potential characteristic of BSAE. This tends to confirm his view that there is a growing tendency to use unadorned *than* to express comparison.

* wow Khanyi is *beautiful than* Masetsane
* but it might be *beautiful than* those big you know
* that we have *few blacks than* whites
* *different than* the ANC than the government
* at school they were *clever than* boys we had the girls
* so I *prefer this culture than* before
* think you will do *different than* the ANC
* going to open for *long hours than* theirs
* women *prefer it than* dark skinned men
* are *most clever people than* xhosas that is true
* *how big is scottsville than* grahamstown
* you are *more strong than* the man who's been

While some features mentioned by Gough as characteristics of BSAE did not occur at all in the XE corpus (e.g. *If at all* you do not pay, you will go to jail), certain additional features of BSAE deserving of separate treatment in later investigations include the invariant word order in indirect questions (*I asked why did he go)* and the use of distinctive subordinators in patterns of complementation (e.g *it made me to know; I tried that I might see her)*

6.   **Concluding remarks**

Standards are generally regarded as accepted or approved ways of doing things, measuring things or judging things, as opposed to other, less valued ways of doing so. They are closely associated with prestige and power, and this is particularly so in the case of language, which is commonly used as symbol of nationhood, common purpose and identity, serving as an institutionalised norm. While Chick and Wade (1997, p. 279) state that in order for gradual planned re-standardisation to occur it is necessary to raise the status of Black South African English,Аso that it is acceptable in important and formal contexts such as education, the media, business and government communication@, ironically, such raising of status seems to be taking place of its own accord, by virtue of the associated status of those

who use the variety daily on the media and in parliament etc. Mutasa (1996) reports a strong association between education and prestige and European languages in Africa, and it is this very education and prestige that is very likely to bring with it the recognition of varieties of Black English in South Africa.

While the norms and patterns of Xhosa English, as a sub-category of Black South African English, are constantly changing, developing and being noticed, official norm-setting or standardisation by educational authorities at this stage is unlikely. Instead, such norm-setting will take place of its own accord, assisted, possibly, by paying careful attention to linguistic description of current practice, usage and attitudes. Only after this process has run its natural course is it likely that codification will take place officially over the next decade or two.

In terms of the three stages of development of standards which Kachru (1986) identifies, varieties of BSAE are getting closer and closer to the third and final stage, when local features are becoming increasingly widely used and accepted. They have passed the first stage when the nativised variety is not recognised, and have arguably also passed the second stage, when it is recognised but ascribed to Aother users@ of the language. By now, such features of local varieties appear to be attracting increasing levels of public support, and there is increasing evidence of some conflict between proponents and opponents of the nativised standard, when it comes to judgements being made by teachers and post-school students of English, as shown by Van der Walt et al. (2002).

A different way of seeing this development is to use Gill=s model (1999) of the phases in the development of standards of English in non-mother-tongue contexts. In terms of this model, Van der Walt and van Rooy (2002) provide argumentation to show that it has developed beyond the Exonormative phase (characterised by dependence on external norms), and moved into the Aliberation and expansion@ phase, where a lot of confusion remains as the norms shifts towards the indigenous, local variety of English. The third phase (labelled the endonormative phase), which lies in the future, would be characterised by a more stable situation of local norms, adapted on the basis of the pragmatic needs of the language users.

Pierre Bordieu=s (1975) model of human communication using the extended metaphor of economics is also very useful in this connection. Speakers of any language become concerned with the economics of linguistic exchanges, the elements of the exchange which carry value, in which one needs to invest in order to >earn dividends= and build up

social capital. Language varieties are prime symbolic assets in this marketplace, and bear the traces of the social structure that they express and reproduce. Although standard English will still undoubtedly hold the key to economic advancement in South Africa, varieties such as BSAE have grown phenomenally in value in recent years: their speakers hold political and economic sway, and they have an extensive public profile, using their variety in public media such as TV and radio, which gives them wide exposure. Learners who are exposed to their model view it as the authoritative one, the model to which they must aspire in order to join the elite. Becoming a member of this linguistic community, made up of speakers of XE, and being associated with such positive judgements is desirable, regardless of exonormative values by MT English speakers, whose views hold little sway in this context.

As Wade (1996) points out, regardless of (what he views as) elitist and discriminatory support for official, exonormative standards, local norms of standardisation is ultimately determined by economic politics and set by speech communities themselves, among whom educated Africans and African English teachers are going to play a crucial role. Clearly, the status of Black South African English is changing rapidly, alongside the need for the adaptation of English for use in its changing contexts of use in South Africa. English is an in international language, free to develop in different ways in different parts of the world. Each of its speakers, mother tongue or not, uses it for his or her own purposes, and part of establishing one=s identity as a black South African entails using English in order to sound like a black South African, and deliberately not using the norms of MT speakers. Many educated speakers of Black South African English deliberately maintain a specific African variety of English, and Gough (1996) refers to the linguistic >schizophrenia= that results from pressures to conform to a norm but also to maintain identity with some ingroup. This short report of the features of the natural, unaffected speech of 299 Xhosa English speakers reveals high levels of conformity to a number of norms which differ from those of standard English. These are all people who have completed 10 years of schooling, and have been taught English throughout those years, either as subject or as medium of instruction. Their English is entrenched and unlikely to change, especially in light of the dismal prospects for educational improvement in primary and secondary schooling in South Africa, where huge numbers of MT English teachers have been retrenched, and training and discipline among remaining teachers is at an all-time low. The English spoken by these people enables them to meet their basic needs and to feel part of the communities in which they live and work. They

recognise their variety in the mouths of politicians and celebrities speaking on radio and TV, and are confident that they too can Atalk the talk@, and speak English when they want to. What other people think of their English matters little to them, in the long run, and while linguistic change takes time, closely watched by the gate-keepers in the form of teachers and students, the time is surely drawing closer for their English to achieve the status of other, more elite varieties.

Endnotes:

1. The contributors to the corpus were strictly limited to Xhosa speakers of direct Xhosa descent who were at least 15 years old (i.e. in grade 10 or higher) and had either been exposed to formal English tuition at school for at least 8 years or had a more limited education but at least 20 years exposure to normal use of English in their daily lives. Contributors were also all resident in the Eastern Cape Province.

2. The fact that 20 characteristics have been selected does not imply that there are only 20 worth reporting on. There are a great deal of other features which deserve further attention in due course.

3. A further example of similar one-to-one correspondence is in indicating completion in such varieties by using Aalready@ (a lexicalised realisation of past tense), or habitual usage through Aused to@ (Williams 1987: 184).

Acknowledgement

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