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Putting some Linguistics into Applied Linguistics: a sociolinguistic study of left dislocation in South African Black English

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1. Introduction. There is little doubt that an African variety of English is very much part of the communicative economy of the new South Africa (for which I shall use the conventional label South African Black English, in short SABE). However, many purists are unhappy with its increased use on radio and television, as the regular stream of vituperative by mother-tongue speakers of English in 'letters to the editor' columns of newspapers will testify. The hope persists in some quarters of South Africa that African students should ideally have command over their first language and a variety of English that was more-or-less standard in grammar and not too deviant in accent/intonation from the southern British norms that have hitherto prevailed in broadcasting. Where the ideal fails (and it does for almost all but those educated in latter-day multi-racial or private schools in which Black pupils are in a minority), the educational system is held to blame (rightly in some instances). From studies of English elsewhere, however, we are also aware that even where the educational system is reasonably sound and on the side of the pupil (which was seldom the case in the Bantu education system of apartheid South Africa) an indigenised (or nativised) form of English is likely to develop. Whilst such a variety may not have a fully acknowledged status in its country of origin, it is more or less acceptable even in informal educational contexts.[1]

Research on SABE has understandably had a predominantly pedagogical bias. One approach involves an older prescriptivism which sought to pinpoint the distortions that English teachers 'suffered' in their L2 pupils, often attributing it to 'interference' from the mother tongues (e.g. Finn 1986). A more informed approach, that of Wildsmith (1992), focused on the influence of teachers' with competence on the English stabilised by pupils

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in the DET schools[2]. *Another trend which was motivated by developmental perspectives aimed at producing educational materials for different levels of schooling, focused more on written discourse than an already existing grammar of Black English (e.g. Mawasha 1977).*

A third trend, slowly developing, is one that aims at describing the grammar of Black English, partly by presenting its departures from standard English and by exploring the historical and cultural influences on the development of this new variety. Into this tradition falls a dissertation by Magura (1984), the only long study of the sociolect, which contains very useful accounts of the historical background to the use of English in Black South Africa, and theoretical perspectives from the 'indigenisation of English' theme stressed by Kachru (e.g. 1982) and the lectal perspectives stressed by Platt and Weber (1982). However, the use of data gathered only from written materials (books and newspapers) has placed some limitations on the value of Magura's work. Shorter studies based on the spoken word are those of Buthelezi (e.g. 1995) and Donnelly (1992), which outline the variant features of SABE, especially the syntax. A thoughtful overview of research on SABE, with some new insights, particularly in respect of discourse markers is that of Gough (1996). An important contribution of the paper is the attempt at establishing a hierarchy of acceptability of SABE features among Xhosa-speaking primary and secondary teachers.

This article aims to advance the syntactic study of SABE by examining one particular feature in socio-structural perspective: left dislocation. This type of topicalisation (which goes by several other names such as pronominal apposition, double subject, pleonastic pronoun etc.) was characterised as "a well-known but little understood feature of non-standard English dialects including Negro dialect" by Wolfram and Fasold (1974:81). The time has surely come - two-and-a-half decades later - to examine the phenomenon in detail in the southern African sociolinguistic context. I believe it imperative that studies of SABE should go beyond general descriptions to a more detailed analysis of one construction (or a small,

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closely-related set of constructions) in order to enable a deeper understanding of the dialect and open up the scope for comparative studies with new (L2) varieties of English in Africa and beyond. Such studies may also be used (where applicable) to explore the relation of SABE to indigenous African languages. It is therefore necessary to dwell on one's methodology in a bit more detail than one finds in the studies cited above.

2. Methodology: This study is premised upon the belief that speech is a more reliable indicator of basic linguistic competence than writing, in L1 and in some L2 situations. In the ESL situation that characterises much of South Africa, the premise is a reasonable one. Concentration on the written mode would exclude some speakers of SABE who do not have functional writing skills in English or any other language. Yet, as I show in another context (Mesthrie 1992), such speakers may well form an important part of a continuum which can shed light on second-language acquisition and sociolinguistic processes throughout the continuum. Furthermore, the EFL phenomenon of speakers who may have good skills in the written - but not the spoken mode - of the L2 is an uncommon one in South Africa. Although writing often affords the user of language more time to plan his or her discourse and may, for that reason, appear to give an L2 speaker a more favourable opportunity for linguistic display, that display is ultimately dependent on the user's mental representation of the rules of the L2, be they structural, sociolinguistic or pragmatic. Furthermore, in L1 and ESL situations the rules are played out in dialogic practice, rather than in the monologues that writing generally imposes. This study therefore breaks with the tradition set by almost all the studies cited thus far, in analysing and citing examples from a spoken data base that seeks to be reasonably representative of the L2 community of users. An important next stage, for applied linguists especially, would be to examine the interface between speech competence, its written manifestations and the transformations of that competence produced

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by writing.

Fifty speakers of English whose mother tongues were an African language were interviewed between 1992 and 1995 under conditions generally advocated by sociolinguists, especially Labov (1984). Of these fifty interviews forty-four were analysed in detail; the remaining six had to be excluded for the purposes of the current study.[3] Our general analysis will involve these 44 speakers, though for certain highly specific details I will limit myself to 24 representative speakers, where to analyse the whole corpus would - at present - be too labour intensive. For the same reason, in the final section of this paper I will examine 12 selected speakers from a detailed socio-syntactic perspective. In terms of their English, the fifty speakers were quite diverse. The corpus included samples from speakers with little knowledge of English (either those only beginning an acquaintance with the language via school, or elderly workers who had fossilised at an early- to middle-interlanguage stage). Other speakers had an advanced competence in a recognisably Black variety of SAE (sometimes unkindly labelled DET English); while still others use a variety that is essentially the same as general (L1) South African English (apart from minor details of accent). These are not three distinct stages, but part of a continuum of which SABE is comprised. (I have not used the familiar *basilect-mesolect-acrolect* trichotomy as espoused by Magura (1984), because, although I believe such a slicing of the continuum to be legitimate, the boundaries between the lects have still to be established by studies such as this one. Further, it may be that other models - e.g. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) of multidimensional sociolinguistic space - may well be more useful). None of the speakers had been brought up with English as an L1; though for a few it has become the dominant language of not just education, but social interaction as well. Most of the interviews were conducted in Cape Town, with people who were either born there or resident for a long period of time as students or workers. The workers tended to originate from the Eastern Cape or Western

Cape (and hence have Xhosa as the first language); the students were mostly from the more northern provinces (Gauteng, Orange Free State and Northern Province), with a diversity of first languages, chiefly Sotho and Tswana, but also Zulu or Swati. None of the interviewees were interviewed 'cold': i.e. they were previous acquaintances of the author as students he had come to know via informal activities (as soccer player and administrator on the UCT campus); lift clubs; via acquaintance with employees in a residential neighbourhood (domestic servants and gardeners), and via welfare/reconstructive work associated with a particular political party. Some interviews were conducted by students: one of my senior undergraduate students undertook eight interviews during vacation in Soweto; whilst another nine interviews were conducted in Cape Town by students majoring in Linguistics as part of their sociolinguistic training.

The 44 interviewees were, I believe, roughly representative of SABE speakers. The corpus included speech samples from people who were unemployed or under-employed (n = 8); people in regular employment in low status positions (n = 13); people with middle-status jobs (n = 2); graduates in professional positions (n = 5); people well on their way to acquiring university degrees (n = 13); pupils still at school (n = 3). The paucity of adult professionals could be a source of criticism - but this lack was compensated by the large number of interviews with university students who are on the threshold of becoming professionals themselves.[4] The gender balance was about even (28 males and 22 females). In terms of education, it is significant that this study managed to reach people with a diversity of school backgrounds. There were people who had been to the Bantu education/DET schools (the majority; n = 38); who had attended private or multi-racial schools (n = 6); and a few who had been either to a mission school or a non-racial school prior to the enforcement of apartheid policy (n = 4). With respect to educational level, 2 had never been to school; 18 had a primary education varying from four years to eight years

duration; 6 had been to high school without matriculating (or were still in high school); 18 were university students or graduates. The vast majority of interviewees were over the age of 18. As we shall see, the level of education and type of school does play a significant role in accounting for the variation we find in SABE syntax.

3. Left dislocation - an introduction: This is by no means the first study to point to the predilection in SABE for a pronoun used in apposition to an NP:

1. The people, they got nothing to eat.[5]

The identification of this grammatical feature is accompanied by a variety of descriptions and judgements. Finn (1986:3), who does not attach a name to this broad phenomenon, considers it to be a literal translation from North Sotho syntax: "it is obvious that such a literal or direct translation is the cause of most errors". Magura (1984: 123) believes it to be an ungrammatical English pattern based on a prototype in North Sotho and other languages. Gough (1986) considers (1) to involve a focusing construction that is based not on the unmarked sentence order of African languages (as the others have it), but on fronting for focusing purposes in languages like Xhosa.

Left dislocation are also a significant feature of English in other parts of Africa. Schmied (1991:72) describes the common use of "anaphoric personal pronouns to take up the subject of the sentence", also referring to them as "so-called resumptive pronouns". In his survey of the broad characteristics of English in Africa, Bokamba (1982:83) refers to "the interposing of an independent subject pronoun between a subject noun and its verb", commonly found amongst Bantu language speakers in Kenya, Zambia and Tanzania. This has also been identified as a feature of Nigerian English (Bamgbose 1982: 106) in which "a focus

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construction is often used, involving the subject of the sentence as focus and an anaphoric pronoun subject". It is no doubt significant that such pronominal apposition has been found to be part of the core grammar of early African American Vernacular English (Schneider 1989:186) and its present-day forms (Traugott 1976: 87). Further afield, the phenomenon is also a prominent feature in the (L2) English of territories like the Indian subcontinent, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Singapore - for an introductory discussion see Platt, Weber and Ho (1984:119-21).

3.1 Left Dislocation in L1 Englishes: It must be recognised at the outset that the construction to be studied here is very much part of international L1 English. The reason why people have found it necessary to point to its existence in L2 Englishes would appear to be that in these varieties topicalisation phenomena generally are not as restricted by register as they are in L1 Englishes. Young's (1980:150) account in his book on (L1) English clause structures is illuminating:

> In this structure [left dislocation] the tag which has the status of a theme is separated from the clause structure proper; it is a bald announcement of a theme given without being fully integrated into the clause. This structure occurs in rather informal varieties of English, and would almost certainly be rejected in a formal prose style. Nevertheless, it occurs systematically in those structures where it does occur.

Finegan and Besnier (1989:237) also maintain that "left-dislocation and fronting are characteristic of the spoken language and seldom occur in writing".[6] It appears that a construction which is essentially limited to colloquial registers of L1 English has been generalised to formal styles as well in New English varieties. Richard Bailey (p.c.) argues that in the history of English, topicalisation phenomena have been suppressed in formal standard styles; their prominence in colloquial speech, in dialect speech, and in L2 speech should not therefore be a matter of surprise.

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Left dislocation (henceforth, LD) involves a fronted NP with a copy pronoun in the main or (less commonly) subordinate clause. The left-moved NP is set off from the rest of the sentence by a short pause. The main function of LD in (L1) English dialects is to reintroduce information that has not been talked about for a while. In addition, it is often contrastive, being "typically used when speakers go through lists and make comments about each individual element in the list" (Finegan and Besnier, 1989:227). The list and contrastive features often go hand in hand, as can be seen from the excerpt from a nursery rhyme cited in (3).

2. The Queen of Hearts
   she made the tarts,
   all on a summer's day.

   The Knave of Hearts
   he stole those tarts,
   and took them clean away.[7]

One of the aims of this study is to ascertain whether LD serves the same pragmatic functions in SABE and whether there are quantitative and qualitative differences between 'African English' usage and that of other varieties. In particular we must consider whether as Platt et al (1984:120) suggest that it is "a particularly legitimate device for emphasising the subject ..., for speakers of the New Englishes who do not make the same use of intonation for emphasizing as do some of the speakers of British English".

3.2 Left Dislocation in SABE: An extended example involving LD in context is given below, as a prelude to examining its socio-pragmatics in detail.

3. Q: You say Christianity is going strong amongst black South Africans, and people are modifying it more and more?

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A: I think people are modifying more and more especially when it comes to Africans. Eh, the largest part of South African population , okay it's Africans, but now we find Christian denominations like, for instance, ZCC of which most, I mean, scholars as such, those who are doing religion or anthropology, sociology, historians, they call it 'African Independent Churches'. So I don't call them ... or most of African students, we don't call them 'African Independent Churches'; we say 'African Indigenous...' or 'Indigenous African Churches'. We think that that is the right word to use. So people, they are modifying according to their understanding of, of, of religion. I mean somebody who's white, Christianity means something different to what it means to me.

In contrast to the above extract, which is taken from the speech of a senior university undergraduate, the one below is of a worker with high school (standard 8) education:

4. Q: Did you ever get arrested? I mean, y' know, because many people had difficulties, because, y' know, they didn't have one, and then the government would come along. Some of my friends were y'know...

A: Yes. Yes, the people, they used to struggle a lot here in South Africa, because the government... when the people, they came into the townships from the homelands and now the government (∅) ask them the permit to be here in townships, you see, and now the people, they got no permit, and the government (∅) lock them up. And now.. the government they...they give the people the straf ['penalty'] of hundred rands for permit to be here in a...in a...townships.

A first consideration involves the function of the NP involved; i.e. whether all NPs lend themselves equally to LD. For SABE the profile is as follows:

	LD
Subject	246
Locative	9
Temporals	2
Direct object	22
Genitive	7
Other	5
n	291

Table 1 - Left dislocation according to NP functions
amongst 44 speakers

(5) (LD: Subject). Oh, Haroun, he was the co-ordinator. Farouk, that's my

economics teacher.

(6) (LD: Direct object). Q: And where did you learn Tswana?

A: Tswana, I learnt it in Pretoria

What is quite clear from table 1 is the dominance of left dislocation with subjects over all the other functions. This is clearly what motivated writers cited above to claim this to be the main, or only, characteristic of topicalisation in African varieties of English. However, direct objects may also be involved in left dislocation in SABE, in small but not insignificant numbers (probably as in informal spoken standard English). Temporals and locatives (again, probably as for informal spoken standard English) have a fairly high occurrence in the data, and while not particularly remarkable in terms of international English, are necessary to complete the picture for topicalisation occurrences.

A second - and arguably more important - parameter of comparison concerns the pragmatic functions of LD. Prince (1981) and Finegan and Besnier (1979) consider the main functions of this construction to involve, firstly, the reintroduction of given information and, secondly, the contrastive and list function. They do not propose any other functions in American English. As table 2 below shows these two functions account for only 35% of the functions served by left dislocation in SABE. Table 2 shows further that the functions identified for American English are but a small part of the total picture for left dislocation in SABE. The main functions (apart from complex NPs which are treated further in a subsequent section) are exemplified in sentences (7) to (10).

7. (Contrast): I believe that no, there is a superpower there, but the Jesus Christ issue, I don't believe in it.

8. (List): Oh, Haroun, he was the co-ordinator. Farouk, that's my economics teacher.

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9. (Given): Q: And where did you learn Tswana?
A: Tswana, I learnt it in Pretoria.

10. (Reintroducing given information): I mean, I don't in any way support the government, but I think the people playing the role in the liberation movement should actually inform the masses of what is happening, and what they want to achieve as the political leaders, and then ask the opinions of the masses, ask the opinion of the domestic workers, ask them. They must not hear from SATU or COSATU whatever, what the needs of them are, they should hear from them, because that's a second hand; and those people, they are earning far more than those people they are representing.

11. *(because)*: because why the taverns, they open Saturdays and Sundays. *(because - why* = 'because')

12. *(People)*: The people are very poor. The people, they got nothing to eat.

Contrast & List			99	30.2%
Complex NPs:				
Partitive Genitives	42	12.8% ⎱		
Relative Clauses	26	7.9% ⎰		
Other	24	7.3%	92	28.0%
Neutral predicate (incl. *people*)			51	15.5%
Given			29	8.8%
After *because*	32			9.8%
Reintroducing given information	16			4.9%
New information	7			2.1%
Value of attribute	2			0.6%
n (sentences)	328			
n (speakers)	24			

Table 2 - Functions of left dislocation in SABE

Making hard and fast judgements about pragmatic functions is far from easy, as they involve

a certain amount of overlap. The category 'neutral predicate', especially with *people*, has

proven quite slippery: essentially it implies that no apparent pragmatic function is served, and

that none of the structural conditions outlined below hold. A large number of tokens for this

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category come from two primary-educated workers, in whose speech it is not entirely clear whether there is a degree of contrastive effect or whether these are neutral predicates. It is also important to note that for the university students the 'neutral predicate' function in speech is very rare.[6]

If only 35% of the functions can be accounted for in terms previously described in linguistics, are the vast majority of LD functions in SABE innovatory? I would argue that a sizeable portion of the balance are extensions of a function that occurs with certain types of NPs in informal English, including informal standard English. This is the discourse function of using a pronoun to keep track of the subject (or, less commonly, another NP) when it is separated from the verb by intrusive material. An example of this discourse function is given in (13) and (14) below:

13. And that chap, believe me, he started to be detained when he was nine.

14. So as a result you will find that the black students, especially the females, they will just keep quiet in a tut.

An allied, and more common, function, is the use of an appositional (or copy) pronoun with relative clauses and other complex NPs. These are exemplified in (15)-(19):

15. (NP + Rel) The people who are essentially born in Soweto, they can speak Tsotsi.

16. (Partitive Genitives) Q: Say, a person in Pretoria wants to give orders and say 'do this, do that', they would use Afrikaans, is that it?

A: Yes, most of them, they'll use Afrikaans.

17. (NP and NP): Q: So when did you meet Emanuel?

A: We stay, hmm, we stay one street in Gugulethu. My mother and his mother, they are neighbours.

18. (Possessive + NP): Q: But do you think the students you've taught have better

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English than you (did) or not really?

A: Not really, because, I mean, firstly they are lazy. Today's children, they are so lazy.

19. (NP + PP): The other before him, he's looking for a job.[9]

These forms are not unknown in L1 English. Visser (1963:56) provides examples from the Old English period up to the twentieth century, stressing that the insertion of a pronoun in subject relation was originally normal idiom, especially when the noun-subject was separated from its verb by an adjunct of some length. Jespersen (1928:72) noted that a relative clause could be "resumed later" by a personal or demonstrative pronoun, in long sentences in which the speaker has failed to keep track of the initial NP. His examples are, however, of a formal, literary nature and involve semantically indefinite heads:

> 20. Who so that troweth nat this, a beste he is. (Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra, cited in Jespersen 1928:71).

Jespersen links this sort of resumption (his term) with a construction that is of more direct relevance to this paper.[10] His comments are worth quoting in full:

> But otherwise this phenomenon is identical with the resumption found so often in colloquial and vulgar speech, when some word or word-group is placed first in a kind of extraposition and afterwards resumed, as in: the old doctor at the hospital *he* said...

It is significant that Jespersen's example from colloquial speech involves a complex NP made up of NP + PP. This function persists in modern L1 English, and though it is rare in formal contexts, can hardly be labelled 'vulgar'. For example, in the course of writing up this paper I came across two examples, repeated here as (21) and (22) in the space of two hours on the BBC programme, *Sportsworld* (23/9/95). Four weeks later (21/10/95) the same

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presenter used the sentence listed as (23).

21. Newcastle United, the log leaders, they play Chelsea tomorrow.. .

22. Ernie Els and Seve Ballesteros, they have a three hole lead...

23. Liverpool, who play Southampton tomorrow, they have 17 points...

These are good examples of copy pronouns, serving what Jespersen considered a resumptive function in informal, standard English style of reporting. One does not hear them in the formal sports reporting one gets in the shorter *Sports Round Up* programme. My impression is that these sentences are broadly similar to SABE left dislocation of complex NPs, with differences in detail. Sentences (21)-(23) involve a head noun with possible 'list' and 'contrast' function relating to the competitors' standing in a league or score-card. Sentences (21) and (23) show that the presenter seems to favour copy pronouns with non-restrictive (appositional) relative clauses. The SABE examples of dislocated complex NPs in my corpus, however, do not differentiate between non-restrictive relatives and restrictive ones for this construction, nor do they always involve a clear-cut 'contrast' and 'list' function.

Table 3 gives the statistics for twelve SABE speakers showing the frequency of use of copy pronouns with dislocated complex NP heads as a proportion of the total number of complex heads used in the interviews by the same speakers:

Relative clauses	17/27	62.9%
Partitive genitives	32/61	52.5%
Other complex NPs	13/25	52.0%
n (speakers)	12	

Table 3 - Frequencies of left dislocation with complex NPs.

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The figures in table 3 will be further refined in section 4 when more specific subgroups within the SABE continuum will be delineated. But again, I propose that on average SABE makes significantly higher use of copy pronouns with complex heads than L1 dialects of English. Schmied (1991:72) is the only one to have pointed to the co-occurrence of the two forms in African varieties of English, when he refers to "the use of anaphoric personal pronouns to take up the subject of the sentence, especially after long and complex subjects (complex through partitive constructions, ... inserted examples, infinitives or relative clauses)".

This leaves us with a residue which is not reported for L1 English: the use of an appositional pronoun after *because* (i.e. in subordinate clauses of reason) and for no apparent pragmatic reason (in which case we may say that the pronoun serves the structural function of marking off the subject from predicate). The figures for these functions as per table 3 are 9.8% and 15.5% respectively, totalling a high 25.3% of all functions in SABE. A significant portion of the neutral predicative function seems to occur after the subject noun *people*. The statistics for the instances of LD, out of all possible instances of *because* and *people* is given in table 4 below:

After *because*	24/56	42.8%
After *people*	51/90	56.6%
n (speakers)	12	

Table 4 - Frequencies of left dislocation with *because* and *people*.

In terms of the total range of functions of left dislocation, it can be seen from table 2 that that these possibly unique functions (after *because* and neutral predicates including *people*) make up a total proportion of 25.3%. This seems a significant difference from patterns in

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other varieties of English; though as we shall see in section 4 it is especially frequent in the 'lower' sociolects of SABE. It is not entirely clear whether the occurrence of LD after *because* and *people* is purely lexico-functional (i.e. whether these two lexical items variably trigger pronominal apposition) or not. Clearly, partitive genitives link up with a possible contrastive function ("some of them" versus "others"), irrespective of whether the contrast is made explicit or not. Perhaps, for some speakers, *people* also implies an inherent or presupposed contrast between 'us' and 'them'.
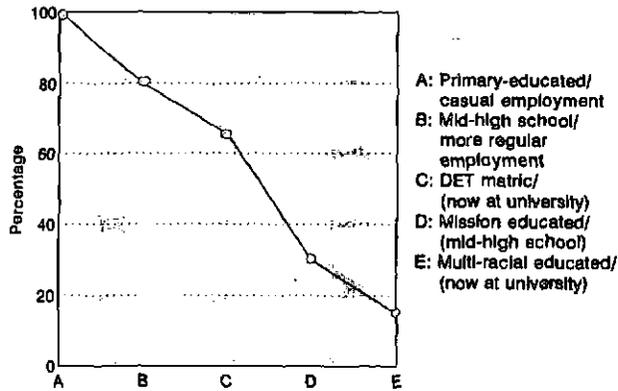
4. **Social variation:** Lumping all 50 speakers (or the 24 speakers analysed in detail) conceals a great deal of significant internal variation in the corpus. The variation is, I argue, not purely social, but reflective of interlanguage development as well. That is, various coherently defined groups display near-fossilisation of interlanguages which are at varying degrees of distance from the target language. To illustrate this it is necessary to identify subgroups in the data according to educational profile. The groups which I think are uncontroversial are (a) people with primary education only; (b) people with secondary education; (c) people with a DET matric who are at university; (d) people with a matric from a private or multi-racial school. In addition, I find it necessary to identify another group, (e) people with a mission school background, rather the DET or private/multi-racial school. This is a first approximation of the most relevant social criteria, though it will not surprise me if the parameter 'employment profile' were to modify this in important ways. That is, for a second language, it is not the usual vernacular social networks that determine language variation, but educational background and employment contacts. The type of school one went to, its language policy and the duration of the education are obviously important factors in an L2 situation. So too are the length of employment, the type of employment (purely manual as against, say clerical or professional), the language of the workplace and one's

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relations with one's employers. For the purposes of showing the differences between the groups identified, two representatives from each level were analysed (except from the larger group of university students with DET background, of whom four were analysed).[4] For left dislocation, it is clear that the educational groups identified give robust indications of different levels of acculturation to TL syntactic norms. The statistics in table 5 give a very clear picture of differences between the groups identified in terms of LD. As an example, the percentages for complex NPs (the sum of the first three columns in table 5) are given in diagramatic form (figure 1).

	Gen	RC	Other Complex	*people*	*because*	TOTAL
Primary-educated/ casual employment	100% (3)	100% (1)	100% (3)	80.0% (36)	87.5% (8)	85.7% (35)
Mid-high school/ more regular employ- ment	72.7% (11)	100% (1)	100% (3)	86.7% (30)	76.9% (13)	65.5% (58)
DET matric/ (now at university)	63.3% (30)	73.7% (19)	50% (6)	25.9% (27)	41.6% (12)	51.1% (94)
Mission educated (mid-high school)	12.5% (8)	0% (2)	75% (4)	22.2% (9)	15.4% (13)	28.5% (34)
Multi-racial ed. (now at university)	11.1% (9)	25% (4)	11.1% (9)	0% (5)	0% (10)	8.1% (37)

Table 5 - Use of resuming pronouns with specific NP types by educational group, amongst 12 selected speakers.

Figure 1: Use of copy pronouns with complex NPs by educational group

A: Primary-educated/
   casual employment
B: Mid-high school/
   more regular
   employment
C: DET matric/
   (now at university)
D: Mission educated/
   (mid-high school)
E: Multi-racial educated/
   (now at university)

To get a fuller picture it would be necessary to analyse more speakers closely. This would, I believe, give us a continuum both socially and linguistically. That is, we would probably be adding flesh to the skeleton outlined in table 5, not changing the skeleton itself.

5. Left dislocation and the passive: Since my aim is to provide a study of the system underlying SABE with possible implications for pedagogy (or, at least, to address some misconceptions amongst some pedagogues) it is important to point - albeit briefly - to possible links between topicalisation and the use of the passive. These are to some extent on opposite poles: languages rich in topics often have little use for the passive (Li and Thompson 1976). Furthermore, in languages having both constructions, topicalisation phenomena belong largely to informal spoken language and have to be "encoded in writing with the help of other constructions such as passives" (Finegan and Besnier 1989:238). This may well have implications for second language acquisition, as Schachter and Rutherford (cited in Ellis 1985:39) argue in connection with the acquisition of English by Chinese and Japanese learners. Transfer effects from the topic-comment structures of their first

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languages, exemplified in (33), were misdiagnosed (understandably, perhaps) by American teachers as malformed passives.

24. Irrational emotions are bad but rational emotions must use for judging (cited in Ellis 1985:39).

Such sentences do not have strong resemblances to SABE patterns described in this paper; for they exhibit pro-drop after the topic *rational emotions*, whereas SABE heavily favours the presence of appositional pronouns. Still, it is a viable hypothesis that the stage at which speakers use a great deal of left dislocation is marked by few passives, and that acculturation to TL syntax involves a decrease in left dislocation with a concomitant rise in passivisation. Some speakers occasionally produced left dislocation where a passive might have been used in the standard:

25. ..and also in the older people there are words that they are using which [have] not anything to do with Xhosa. (Formal standard equivalent: ... Amongst older people there are words *that are used* which don't have anything to do with Xhosa.)

26. Yah, but the problem is sometimes the words we use in Zulu, you can use them in Xhosa... (Formal standard equivalent: Sometimes the words we use in Zulu *can be used* in Xhosa.)

Further work needs to be done on the link between these two phenomena; at this stage I can merely present raw correlations. The final table (6) of this paper gives an indication of the number of left dislocated NPs, the number of passives (with the number of lexical passives used in addition to syntactic passives in brackets) and the total number of sentences per educational group.[12] This preliminary comparison confirms that the relationship between passive and left dislocation is worthy of further investigation and may well have some insights for the applied linguist.

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	LD	Passives		n (sentences)
Primary-educated/ casual employment	35	0	(2)	267
Mid-high school/ more regular employment	58	0	(0)	331
DET matric/ (now at university)	94	31	(2)	897
Mission educated (mid-high school)	34	7	(4)	431
Multi-racial ed. (now at university)	37	11	(4)	369

Table 6 - A preliminary comparison between occurrences of
left dislocation and passives amongst 12 speakers

6. Conclusions: Many academics (some of whom I have cited earlier) have faulted the use

of LD in SABE. According to Gough's survey (in press), left dislocation is low down on

the scale of acceptability amongst Xhosa-speaking teachers of English, who felt it to be

incorrect usage. Yet much of the left dislocation in SABE seems to be based on permissible

patterns of LI English; albeit at a higher frequency. Here SABE gives full play to discourse

processes that occur at infrequent levels in L1 English: some lects come close to

grammaticalising left dislocation. In particular, the level at which appositional pronouns are

used after complex and interrupted NPs is probably greater in SABE. As far as pragmatic

functioning is concerned, SABE does not seem to be innovative: it shares the same broad

discourse functions that left dislocation serves in L1 usage. Sometimes left dislocation seems

not to serve any pragmatic function in SABE and may be triggered lexically in some

sociolects by items like *because* and *people*).

There is a continuum of usage within SABE with people from multi-racial school

backgrounds approximating to standard English norms quantitatively for left dislocation;

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lower lects giving full play to these processes; and other groups somewhere in between. There seems to be a difference between older people with significant mission education (up to 8 years) and DET matriculants.

Educationists might keep in mind that the use of LD is well established in SABE speech and follows the rules of general English, but at quantitatively higher levels. It is not an impediment to communication, but an aid to making discourse functions like 'given', 'contrast' etc. explicit. (As we have seen, it also serves to keep track of interrupted subject NPs and complex NPs.) However, if the teacher's aim is to add what is from the perspective of standard English, a formal dimension to a student's English it may well be necessary to devise techniques for reducing the explicit marking of these functions.[13] In speech this would be done by enabling students to produce varying stress and intonation; and possibly exploring other formal stylistic phrases of the type 'as for X; speaking of X; etc'. In written registers encouraging the use of the passive as a stylistic alternative may also be worth exploring. An alternative approach would be to educate the teachers to accept LD even in formal discourse. I suspect that neither approach (changing the students' linguistic habits or the teachers' linguistic pre-conceptions) is going to be easy to effect.

While it is possible that the high use of LD is attributable to African language influences, this has still to be proved. Rather than take this for granted, a necessary part of such proof would involve a parallel procedure to that delineated in this article for a language like Xhosa. However, the idea that it is the *concord* pattern of Xhosa (or other language) *per se* that induces left dislocation is patently simplistic, given that subject prefixes to verbs are purely grammatical in African languages, whereas left dislocation serves a range of pragmatic purposes.

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Acknowledgements

Notes

1. I should point out that there is no label for the variety in question amongst South Africans.

2. DET stands for the now defunct Department of Education and Training, which administered Black education until 1994.

3. These were six speakers of Makhuwa residing in Durban, whose history is a very special case within Black South African society and sociolinguistics.

4. At least five more students have since gained high-status jobs in the private sector.

5. In this paper single underlining denotes the phrase undergoing left dislocation; double underlining denotes the copy/shadow/resumptive pronoun. *I make some proposals about terminology later in the paper.*

6. Fronting is the term used for a related topicalisation phenomenon which puts a non-subject NP of an active sentence into first position without pronoun apposition (e.g. *Everybody I go and ask something*). This construction (and other related constructions like focus movement and right dislocation) are quite common in the corpus; but for lack of space are not treated in this paper.

7. I follow the punctuation for this rhyme set out in Provensen and Provensen (1976)

8. Rodrik Wade (p.c. and 1985) is of the opinion that the general function of left dislocation in SABE is simply to signal a change of topic. This is an elegant hypothesis which could reduce some of the variance in my data, especially reanalysing some of the occurrences under 'neutral predicate' as simply 'topic change'. However, not all occurrences of what I label 'neutral predicate' especially with *people* can be accounted for in this way. More generally, although 'topic change' has the advantage of being more general and explanatory than specific factors like 'contrast' and 'reintroducing given information', not all my data can be reinterpreted in this fashion. This may well be a function of my more diverse data base.

9. Sentences such as (18) and (19) also involve a pragmatic function of contrast and were therefore each scored twice (under 'complex NP' as well as 'contrast'). Only a few of the left- moved complex NPs treated in this section seemed to have such dual function.

10. Jespersen's term 'resumptive' is used in modern syntax in ways that are quite different: usually for the use of what might be better termed a 'shadow' pronoun (see Lass 1987:189) in the relative clause itself, as in the SABE sentence ... *the kind of education that these people are trying to give* it *to us.* Such examples are not uncommon in the SABE corpus, but not of immediate interest to this paper.

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11. These 12 were, of course, the same group discussed in the earlier tables.

12. A lexical passive is one learnt as a vocabulary item, e.g. *I got married*; whereas syntactic passive has a close relation with an active equivalent: e.g *We were introduced to libraries*.

13. That is Platt, Weber and Ho's suggestion quoted earlier that left dislocation in New Englishes serves the same function as an intonation pattern that emphasizes the subject in British English is tenable, apart from the vagueness of the term 'emphasizing'.

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