



BLACK ENGLISH AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA - AN INVESTIGATION

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"The fear of the Lord is beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).



KEY WORDS

1. New Englishes
2. Black English
3. Standard English
4. Teaching model
5. Linguicism
6. Interlanguage
7. Scalogram
8. Errors/Fossilisation
9. Accent
10. Econocultural model
11. Cline
12. Bidialecticism
13. Kachru's concentric circles



SLEUTELWOORDE

1. Nuwe Engelse spreektaal
2. Swart Engels
3. Standaard-Engels
4. Onderwysmodel
5. Linguisisme
6. Intertaal
7. Skalogram
8. Foute/Fossilering
9. Aksent
10. Ekonomies-kulturele model
11. Verbuiging / afname / neiging
12. Bidialektisisme
13. Kachru se konsentriese sirkels

SUMMARY

"The emergence of English as an international language in a number of domains has implications which are becoming a matter of widespread discussion among both linguists and the general public. In the face of the increasing number of the functions for which English is regarded as more useful or convenient than any other language, and the growth in the numbers of its speakers and learners - it is only slowly that we are beginning to sort out the practical and theoretical implications for the early part of the new millennium of this unprecedented linguistic predominance" (Honey, 1996:99).

Despite its high status, the standard of English teaching and learning, especially in severely underfunded black South African schools has suffered rapid deterioration. At the moment, there are no indications that the downward slide can be halted. The non-native English language debate is compounded by arguments rejecting the pedagogic notion of "Standard English" and advocating a linguistic ethos which suggests that all forms of English are equal. This has resulted in the proliferation of terms such as "black English", "Ghanaian English", "Indian English" etc. which are claimed to be on an equal footing with "British" and "American" English or standard English (Ahulu, 1992). This thesis makes the important point that both "educated" black and white people in South Africa make use of standard English. But the concept of standard English must be properly understood. Quirk at the 1995 English Academy conference, was pushing the term "general English" as an alternative name for "standard English." A variety of English such as British or American English incorporates a standard variety that is encoded in grammars, dictionaries and guides of usage, taught in educational institutions, used to print and often found in the usage of those regarded as educated users. However, those who express "concern for the recognition and acceptance of the English language standard in the education system are sometimes accused of ignoring socio-linguistic realities" (Wright, 1996: 154).

This thesis discusses several language features which are peculiar to English as a second language (ESL). These features have been claimed to yield the characteristics of a "South African black English." The analysis shows that these characteristic features

are not consistently or reliably realised. In fact according to current research it would seem that most "features are actually teacher-influenced" (Buthelezi, 1989:40). Non-standard ESL features indicate according to Wright (1995: 8) "a symptom of the sad failure of our education system rather than a sign of the creative evolution of a vigorous new national variety of English." Wright maintains that "to advocate the institutionalising of non-standard English-attributable in large measure to apartheid's legacy of low educational standards - would be neither radical nor progressive, but a profoundly conservative attitude, imposing and enshrining mediocrity."

The debate about "black English" in South Africa has not yet gained momentum even though it is part of the common currency. There seems to be a powerful conventional opinion in influential circles that claims that there is a black English in South Africa. The possibility exists that a local variety of English in South Africa may ultimately emerge. But the internationally viable variety will still be needed, one hopes by an ever growing portion of the population as education and opportunity increase. Standard English is the form of English that is taught in South African schools and tertiary institutions. In other words, it includes all users of the "educated" form of English all over the world and it also fulfils more and broader language functions than the non-standard form. The pedagogic notion of standard English, however, does not imply refusal to accept the existence of non-standard varieties of English or of features in colloquial use that are non-standard and geographically or culturally specific.

It is all the more important according to Ahulu (1994: 26) for those concerned with education, especially "the curriculum designers, subject advisors and textbooks writers, to know the forms of English they should consider and emphasize as the educational target, which should subsequently guide teachers and examiners."

The evidence we have in the field of "black English" according to Ahulu's (1992) findings in Ghana largely consists of coinages and other lexical modifications, and the listing of isolated examples of grammatical divergence. What is referred to as "educated black English" is nothing more than standard English with an injection of vocabulary items of South African origin. Such phenomena as coinage, lexical borrowing are processes by which standard English is expanding its lexicon as an

international language. The inferior conditions of years of underfunding and relentless application of the underlying philosophy of apartheid education have had a critical and profound bearing on the state of ESL teaching. For professional careers, the country's economic development and membership of the international scene, to mention but a few requirements, standard English is essential. Teacher training institutions in South Africa are at the moment going through a rationalisation and restructuring process and they need to review their ESL curriculum and programmes. These teacher training colleges should produce well equipped ESL teachers who are capable of dealing with the language dynamics in the ESL classroom situation.

OPSOMMING

Honey (1996: 99) voer aan dat "die verskyning van Engels as internasionale taal in verskeie areas implikasies meebring het wat tans grootskaalse bespreking uitlok by linguïste en lede van die publiek. In die lig van die toenemende aantal gebruike waarvoor Engels ingespan word, as synde meer bruikbaar of gerieflik te wees as enige ander taal, asook die groeiende aantal persone wat Engels praat en leer - begin die praktiese en teoretiese implikasies van hierdie onvoorsiene taaldominering nou stadigaan verstaan te word, aan die begin van die nuwe millenium".

Ten spyte van sy hoë status, het die standaard van Engelse leer en onderrig, veral in onderbefondsde Suid-Afrikaanse swart skole vinnig agteruitgegaan. Daar is tans geen aanduiding dat die afwaartse neiging gestop kan word nie. Die nie-moedertaal Engelse debat is saamgestel uit argumente wat die pedagogiese opvatting van "standaard Engels" verwerp en 'n taalkundige etos wat alle vorme van Engels gelykwaardig ag, voorstaan. Dit het tot gevolg dat terme soos "swart Engels", "Ghaniese Engels", "Indiese Engels" ens. ontstaan, wat gelykwaardig aan "Britse" en "Amerikaanse" Engels of standaard Engels geag word (Ahulu, 1992). Die konsep "standaard Engels" moet egter deeglik verstaan word. By die Engelse akademie se konferensie in 1995 het Quirk die term "algemene Engels" as 'n alternatief vir die term "standaard Engels" aangemoedig. Verskeie soorte Engels soos Britse of Amerikaanse Engels sluit 'n standaard variëteit in wat gekodeer is in grammatikale geskrifte, woordeboeke en gebruikersgidse, gedoseer word in opvoedkundige inrigtings, gebruik word in drukwerk en dikwels gevind word in die taalgebruik van diesulkes wat as geleerde gebruikers beskou word. Persone wat hulle "bemoei met die aanvaarding van die Engelse taalstandaard in die opvoedingstelsel word egter soms daarvan aangekla dat hulle die sosio-linguïstiese realiteite ignoreer" (Wright, 1996: 154).

Hierdie tesis behandel verskeie taalverskynsels wat eie is aan Engels as tweedetaal (ET). Daar word beweer dat hierdie kenmerke aan "Suid-Afrikaanse swart Engels" sy karaktertrekke besorg. Die analise toon dat hierdie kenmerke nie konstant of op betroubare wyse realiseer nie. Om die waarheid te sê, onlangse navorsing toon dat die meeste van hierdie "kenmerke 'n resultaat is van die onderwys-invloed" (Buthelezi,

1989:40). Kenmerke van nie-standaard ET is volgens Wright (1995: 8) eerder "'n gevolg van die mislukte onderwysstelsel, as die evolusionêre ontwikkeling van 'n nuwe kragtige nasionale variëteit van Engels." Wright voer aan dat om nie-standaard Engels, wat grootliks toegeskryf kan word aan apartheid se nalatenskap van lae onderwysstandaarde, as standaardtaal in die samelewing te bevorder, nog radikaal nog progressief sal wees, maar eerder diepgaande konserwatisme sal weerspieel, wat middelmatigheid sal afdwing en verheerlik.

Die debat oor "swart Engels", in Suid-Afrika het nog nie momentum gekry nie alhoewel dit in hierdie tyd baie aktueel is. Daar is skynbaar 'n sterk konvensionele opvatting in invloedryke kringe dat daar 'n "swart Engels" in Suid-Afrika is. Die moontlikheid bestaan dat 'n plaaslike variëteit van Engels uiteindelik mag ontstaan. 'n Mens hoop dat namate onderwys en geleentheid toeneem die internasionaal lewensvatbare variëteit nog deur 'n al groter wordende gedeelte van die bevolking benodig sal word. Standaard Engels is die vorm van Engels wat in Suid-Afrikaanse skole en tersiêre inrigtings gedoseer word. Dit sluit dus alle gebruikers van die "opgevoede" vorm van Engels regoor die wêreld in en vervul ook 'n groter verskeidenheid taalkundige funksies as die nie-standaard vorm. Die pedagogiese opvatting van standaard Engels impliseer dus nie dat die bestaan van nie-standaard variëteite van Engels ontken word nie, of van verskynsels wat kenmerkend is van omgangstaal, wat nie-standaard is of wat eie is aan 'n geografiese gebied of kultuurgroep nie.

Dit is dus volgens Ahulu (1994:26) soveel belangriker dat die persone betrokke by opvoeding in Suid-Afrika, veral die kurrikulum-opstellers, vakadviseurs en handboekskrywers, wat onderwysers en eksamineerders gevolglik moet lei, die vorme van Engels wat hulle in ag behoort te neem, ken en beklemtoon as opvoedkundige doelstelling.

Die bewyse wat ons het in die veld van "swart Engels" volgens Ahulu (1992) se bevindings in Ghana bestaan grootliks uit nuutskeppings en ander leksikale wysigings en die notering van geïsoleerde voorbeelde van grammatikale afwykings. Dit waarna verwys word as "opgevoede swart Engels" is niks anders as standaard Engels met 'n inspuiting leksikale items van Suid-Afrikaanse oorsprong nie. Verskynsels soos

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