

## CHAPTER 4

### GRAMMATICAL AND PHONOLOGICAL DEVIANT USAGE WHICH CHARACTERISES BLACK ESL IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3, the concept of "black English" has been explored. We have also come to the conclusion that the educated white and black varieties of English are more similar than different. However, there are certain trivial grammatical and phonological features which characterise English spoken by black South Africans. These features occur at various levels of the cline. They are not fixed to only one level of the cline, hence, Quirk earlier in this study maintained that it is difficult to codify or institutionalise non-native varieties of English. Gough (1996:53) claims that "research examining the English of black South Africans is still in its infancy." He further makes the point that "the language learning environment has been impoverished through the policies of Bantu Education with overcrowded classrooms, limited facilities and the majority of undertrained teachers who use typically conservative teaching methods."

The following are some of the factors which seem to have contributed towards the persistent deviant ESL features which characterise it as "educated black English":

- \* unskilled ESL teachers and lack of appropriate role models
- \* inadequate ESL resources
- \* separate residential areas for native and non-native speakers of English
- \* low and inadequate teacher training
- \* teachers having little understanding of second language acquisition theories and how to implement them in the classroom situation
- \* lack of effective English in-service training

However, according to Gough, "an alternative acquisitional context has emerged with

the dismantling of Apartheid and the integration of state education from 1991." Gough further makes the point that "increasing numbers of blacks now enjoy access to previously whites only -schools." Gough further argues that in this new "context there is far greater pressure to speak English and even to change one's accent than in township schools, as well as extensive socialisation and interaction with English speakers and parental pressure to speak English at home." Gough continues to make an important point that in some instances, this new situation "appears to have led to at least partial language shift with a perceived decrease in competence in the mother tongue, as Schlebush (1994: 98 - in Gough 1996: 55) found in the Model C schools she investigated."

It was noted in chapter 3 that "educated black English"-users at the apex of the "competence continuum" have almost "native-like command" of English. However, their accent is obviously the main language aspect which characterises their English as "black". Nevertheless, their accent does not cause intelligibility problems, especially when conversing with both non-native and native speakers. Secondly and most importantly, if Quirk and Strevens are right, accent is no longer regarded as part of standard English.

On the other hand, black English users in the middle to the bottom of the cline may switch from one level to another. The English of this group has frequent grammatical "errors". Their vocabulary is limited and it is only adequate for simple social conversation (c.f. Patkowski's modified model c.f. Table 4).

Kachru (1985) expresses his concern about what we simply refer to as "errors" or "mistakes". This point was raised earlier in this study. We are now going to elaborate on this subject of "errors". He refers to "errors" as "innovations". He clarifies that there are two types of innovations:

- \* those initiated by the users of the inner circle
- \* those initiated by the users of the outer circle.

Kachru maintains that innovation in the outer circle, refers to the linguistic formations which are contextually and or formally distinct from language use in the inner circle. He argues that to label such formations such as "mistakes" and "errors" is pejorative. Kachru does not provide the examples to show what he means by "creativity" or "allowable deviations". These concepts appear to be attractive but it is difficult to imagine where and when they should be used. Furthermore, he does not provide any details on how the ESL teachers should deal with this situation in the classroom situation, whether they should correct the errors or just tolerate them.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine English expressions peculiar to South African black users. We also enquire into the nature and root causes of these persistent deviant features.

The following sections (4.1.2 - 4.1.4) provide most examples of persistent features of English grammar that are likely to give trouble to the non-native learners, especially at the "mesolect" and "acrolect" levels. Interestingly enough, some of these examples seem to be similar to features of the other ESL users around the world. This probably shows that ESL learners follow almost the same processes in their second language acquisition. It is also evident from the examples given in this study that they do not cause any intelligibility or communication problems.

The deviations from standard English are more likely to be developmental "errors" noted earlier on the cline of bilingualism. It has been illustrated throughout this thesis that these types of features do not signal the beginnings of a codifiable "new English". This chapter therefore, examines deviant grammatical usage involving inter alia:

- \* articles (c.f. section 4.1.1)
- \* the progressive aspect (4.1.2)
- \* question forms (c.f. section 4.1.3)

- \* tense aspect system (c.f. section 4.1.4)
- \* non-count as count nouns (1)
- \* extension of the progressive (2)
- \* gender conflation in pronouns (3)

The final part of this chapter focuses on the speech sounds of English and black languages. It explores the status of pronunciation, teaching and learning in ESL contexts (c.f. sections 4.2 - 4.6). This chapter also explores the following sections which deal with phonological aspects of ESL:

- \* Viewpoints on ESL pronunciation teaching (c.f. section 4.2)
- \* South African Black ESL pronunciation debate (c.f. section 4.3)
- \* The whole question of stress timed and syllable timed languages (c.f. section 4.3.1)
- \* intonation (c.f. section 4.3.2)
- \* conclusion (c.f. section 4.4)
- \* the pronunciation debate - a historical overview (c.f. section 4.5)
- \* basic issues in pronunciation teaching (c.f. section 4.6)
- \* conclusions (c.f. section 4.7)

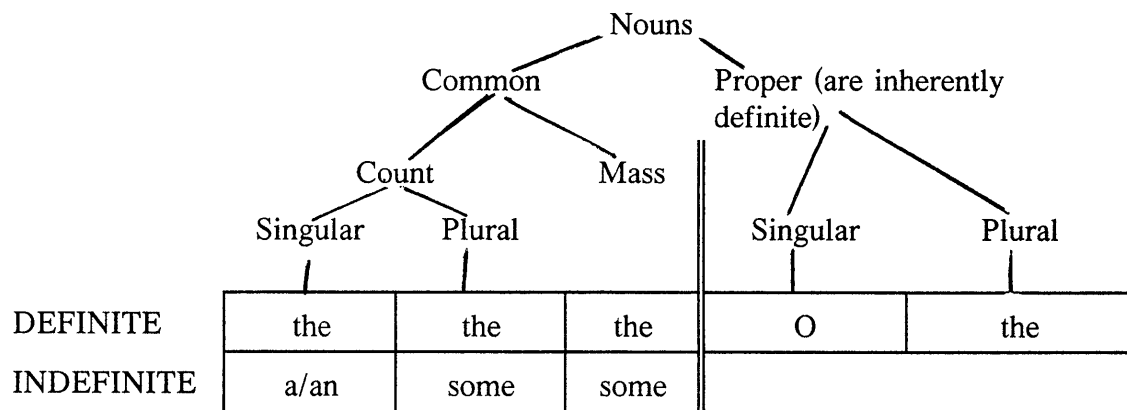
#### 4.1.1 Usage involving articles

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983:172) maintain that "the historical development of articles in English is similar to that of most other languages which have developed an article system." Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman further claim that "the definite article is derived from the demonstrative signalling distance (i.e. **that**) while the indefinite article is derived from the numeral **one**." The latter derivation, in their view, "helps explain why the form of the indefinite article occurring before a word with an initial vowel sound is **an**; that is, the **n** in **an** and **one** are historically related" (Celce-Murcia, Larsen-Freeman, 1983: 172). When dealing with an English article system, it is important to consider **common nouns** (e.g., a child, a school, a country) or **proper nouns** (e.g., Charles, London, Cape Town).

In addition, all common nouns are classified as **mass** (e.g., water, milk, luggage) or **count** (e.g., a drink, a shirt, a bookcase) because only count nouns have singular and/or plural forms (Celce-Murcia/Larsen-Freeman, 1983: 172).

<b>Mass</b>	<b>Count</b>
* two waters; a water	two beverages; a beverage
* two clothings; a clothing	two shirts; a shirt
* two luggages, a luggage	two suitcases, a suitcase

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, argue that both the proper/common and the count/mass distinction seem to overlap in certain cases. They maintain that the overlap is useful and necessary for mastery of the English article system. They summarise this discussion in a diagrammatical form:



**FIGURE 3: COMMON-PROPER NOUNS DISTINCTION**

Deviant usage of articles is very common in black ESL. Black languages make use of the locative prefix instead of articles. This prefix does not denote definiteness or indefiniteness, e.g. Xitsonga:

- U ya exikolweni      "He/she is going to school"  
 U ya eposweni      "He/she is going to the post office"

Black languages therefore, do not make use of articles to signal definiteness and indefiniteness as demonstrated above. The most common means other than the locative prefix is word order, i.e. the noun or pronoun in topic position is definite whereas a noun or pronoun in comment position tends to be indefinite, e.g. Xitsonga:

I mani a fambaka? "Who is leaving?" > Yena wa famba. HE is leaving (emphasis on pronoun Yena in topic position to signal definiteness). Instead of Wa famba yena. In this case, yena is in a comment position, therefore there is no emphasis on it.

The following examples are very common to ESL users: Omission of the indefinite article "a"

DEVIANT USAGE	STANDARD FORM
* I want to buy few articles	I want to buy a few articles
* She is still examining few more applications	She is still examining a few more applications

The singular indefinite article "a" in collocation with "few" which implies plurality, modifying a plural noun is often omitted.

The following examples show the omission of the discordant singular article "a" from an expression which appears plural by substituting it with "some": e.g. "some few" instead of "a few"

DEVIANT USAGE	STANDARD FORM
* He left some few minutes ago	He left a few minutes ago
* I met James some few weeks ago	I met James a few weeks ago
* Could you please wait for some few minutes	Could you please wait for a few minutes
* The accident occurred some few days before Christmas	The accident occurred a few days before Christmas

As a result of this usage, the finer distinctions in meaning between "few", "a few" and "some few" are very often lost in ESL users.

The sentence "he left some minutes ago", is a standard form but infrequent and it is also an educated standard except the form "some time ago". The expression "he left some minutes ago" is often muddled with "I met James some weeks ago".

The use of "many a" and singular noun e.g. many a time often becomes "many a" and "plural noun".

DEVIANT USAGE	STANDARD FORM
* I came here many a times to see you.	I came here many times to see you.
* I have warned you many a times but you wouldn't listen.	I have warned you many times but you wouldn't listen.

In the classroom situation, some students make these errors, others do not. The deviant usages cannot be referred to as evidence for a new English. They are simply errors which need to be attended to or addressed by the teacher. Fossilisation takes place if these errors are either not detected or tolerated to recur with the hope that one day they would disappear. Quite often they never disappear. Therefore a teacher has to work out strategies to correct these errors whenever they occur. The concept of "errors" and "fossilisation" is expanded in chapter 6.

#### 4.1.2 The use of the progressive aspect

ESL learners have difficulties with the general use of the continuous tense in English. For example: there are verbs which occur with the progressive aspect and those which do not. Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman (1983: 71) give the following categories of verbs which can and those which cannot occur with the progressive aspect. However, ESL usage generally flouts these restrictions and often use these stative verbs with the progressive aspect.

- (1) Sensory perception: e.g. see, hear, feel, taste, smell - when an immediate and literal sensory perception is being expressed without any suggestion of hallucination.

- \* I am seeing a tree behind the house + I see a tree behind the house.  
In isiZulu this is because of "ya" in Ngiyabona i.e. there is no Simple Present in isiZulu.
  - \* Jabu is knowing the answer = Jabu knows the answer.
- (2) Emotion - e.g. want, desire, love, hate, like, dislike - without any added expression of change over time or exceptionally strong feeling.
- \* We are desiring an explanation = We desire an explanation.
- (3) Measurement - e.g. weigh, cost, measure, equal.
- \* This steak is weighing 10kg = This steak weighs 10kg.
  - \* This watch is costing R20 = This watch costs R20.
- (4) Relationship - e.g. have, own, contain, entail, belong.
- \* Fiso is having a new car = Fiso has a new car.
  - \* I am owning this house = I own this house.
  - \* This pen is belonging to me = This pen belongs to me.

These examples show deviant uses of English by ESL learners. However, the question is whether the sum total of deviant uses really constitutes a new English. Do all learners make these errors in any case? These examples also do not cause intelligibility problems. We have indicated earlier that usage which differs so little from standard English can hardly be said to be a separate English. Many ESL users all over the world seem to have difficulties with the use of the progressive aspect as we will see in chapter 8. Ahulu (1992) reaffirms this view when he makes the point that certain errors are common to ESL throughout the world.

#### 4.1.3 Question forms

This section focuses on the three types of question forms: Tag questions, yes-no questions and Wh-questions which are quite often used incorrectly by ESL users of English in general including black users of English in South Africa.



#### 4.1.3.1 Construction of tag questions

A tag question is a short question which is appended to a statement when the speaker seeks confirmation of his statement. Brown (in Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1983: 165) "found empirical evidence for the claim that tags are primarily an informal, conversational device." She also discovered that "tags have five major functions and several minor ones." The first three she claims, seem to be related to the speaker's checking of information, whereas the last two where or when the speaker is expressing feelings or opinions:

- \* Indicating inference: So that proves malice, doesn't it?
- \* Seeking agreement: They keep coming back, dont they?
- \* Inviting confirmation: She is beautiful, isn't she?
- \* Expressing doubt: He wasn't here, was he?
- \* Expressing opinion: But that makes a mockery of belief, doesn't it?

The usage of tag questions in ESL, reflects only one of the functions listed above, i.e. "inviting confirmation".

A common ESL usage has the following pattern in the construction of tag questions.

- \* She is beautiful )
- \* She isn't beautiful ) isn't it/not so?/né?
- \* He was here )
- \* He wasn't here )

It is difficult to trace the origin of the tag "né" which is quite common in ESL English tag question forms. It is frequently used in the following languages:

- (1) **Xitsonga**
  - U famba na mina. A ne/a niri?
  - You are going with me. Né?

(2) **isiZulu**

- Uyahambana?

You are going. Né?

(3) **Afrikaans**

Jy gaan saam ry. Né?

You are travelling with us. Né?

(4) **Tshivenda**

U tuwa na nne na?

You are going with me. Né?

It appears that this tag "né" is derived from Afrikaans.

In standard English, if the speaker expects a negative response from the listener, he will use a negative statement with an affirmative question tag.

Mother is going to town, isn't she?

Lucas hasn't gone, has he?

You are late, aren't you?

You aren't the taxi driver, are you?

In standard English, where the tag has a falling tone, it shows that the speaker is comparatively certain that the information is correct, and simply expects the listener to provide confirmation. When it has "a rising tone it indicates a lesser degree of certainty, so that a question tag in standard English functions as a request for information" (Nwaila, 1990: 30).

Finally Celce-Murcia and Larson-Freeman (1983) argue that other languages have something equivalent to the English question tag: for example, French has "n'est - ce pas?" and German has "nicht wahr?" They further claim that native speakers of such languages sometimes latch on to a highly frequent tag form such as "isn't it?", they overgeneralise this form and use it for all cases, which produces deviant forms such as

the ones given earlier in this section. We can therefore conclude that a number of black ESL learners could possibly make this overgeneralisation.

#### 4.1.3.2 Yes-No questions

These types of questions require a "yes" or "no" answer as opposed to the way one supplies information in answering wh-questions which require you to provide information. English forms yes-no questions by means of inversion. For example:

- (a) James is your brother > (Inversion)
- (b) Is James your brother?

ESL learners often tend not to invert and they depend on intonation instead especially at the bottom of the cline. For example the above question in ESL would be:

- (c)\* James is your brother?

Inversion is by no means a universal way of forming yes-no questions. Some languages use phrases or particles at the beginning or end of a sentence to signal that what follows or precedes is a yes-no question. Other languages such as black languages signal yes-no questions with a rising tone. For example:

Xitsonga: (↗ = rising tone, ↘ = falling tone):

isiZulu

(1) Wá fámbá? Are you going?

isiZulu: ùyáhàmbà nà? \*You go/going

(2) Wá fámbà She is going

isiZulu: úyáhámbá \*She/he go/going

(3) Wá fámbà You are going

isiZulu: úyáhámbá \*You go/going

- (4)            Wà fámhá?            Is she/he going?  
isiZulu:      úyáhámhá ná?        \*She/he go/going

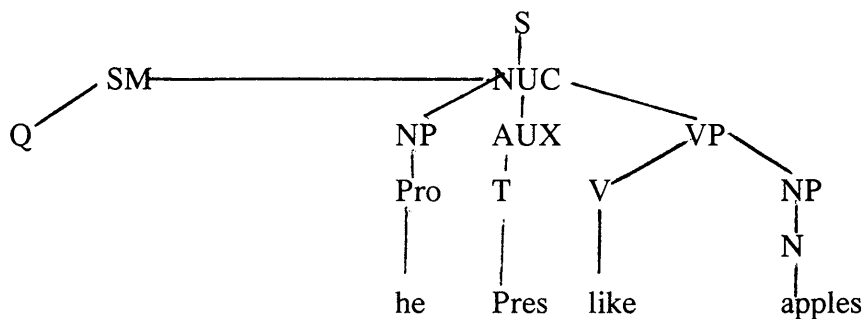
The concord "wa" or "u" for example, changes according to the tone. "Wa" or "u" with a rising pitch, refers to a third person singular, i.e. she/he. With a falling pitch, it denotes a second person singular, i.e. you. With a level tone, it denotes a second person singular in a statement.

It is evident from the above examples that African languages do not make use of auxiliary verbs. Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman (1983) suggest that all ESL students should be taught that in a yes-no question the auxiliary verb should appear initially and mark the tense of the question. If there is no auxiliary, the copula BE should be fronted and carry tense. If there is no auxiliary or BE verb to carry tense then DO must be introduced to serve this function. For example:

- (d)    He likes apples > Does he like apples?

Thus, the application of the subject/auxiliary transformation in sentences without an auxiliary verb or BE copula will result in application of DO-support rule.

For example:



**FIGURE 4: THE APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT/AUXILIARY INVERSION**

1.    Output of base:            Q he pres like apples
2.    Sub/aux-inversion:        pres he like apples

3. Do support: pres DO he like apples
4. Affix attachment: DO + pres he like apples
5. Subj + Verb agreement: Does he like apples?

The DO auxiliary is added by the DO-support transformation. Such a transformation inserts DO following the tense marker when the tense marker is separated from the auxiliary verb or main verb. The DO-support rule is the most difficult rule for the black ESL learners. If the learners are only taught the inversion rule in English, they are likely to apply it with the inversion of the main verbs instead of fronting a DO-support rule.

- e.g. \* Goes Mary home?  
\* Likes he apples?  
\* Complete they their homework?

This problem is also fairly frequent in the English spoken by Afrikaners because Afrikaans does not make use of auxiliary verbs too e.g.

Jy gaan huis toe > Gaan jy huis toe?

You are going home > Are you going home?

Afrikaans inverts principal verbs in question forms whereas English makes use of subject/auxiliary inversion.

As we have seen in the example (d) above, the function of the phrase structure rules is to generate the basic structure of a sentence. Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman argue that although the analysis that the phrase structure rules provide is useful in understanding English structure, people obviously do not speak in basic structures. However they argue that their rules are a useful component of grammar if we want to explain how synonymous sentences, those that have the same meaning but different forms, can be derived from the same basic structure. In addition, if a learner asks, "Does Sam can sing?" he is probably reflecting a competence level in which all verbs require a pre-posed DO auxiliary for question formation. He has committed an error which reveals a portion of his or her competence in the target language.

Finally, Ellis (1985) argues that ESL learners' (Yes-No questions) interlanguage is constantly changing. He or she does not jump from one stage to the next, but rather slowly revises the interim systems to accommodate new hypotheses about the target language systems. For example, we have seen earlier in this section that early Yes-No questions are typically non-inverted, but when the learner acquires the subject-inversion rule, he or she does not apply it immediately to all Yes-No questions. To begin with, he or she restricts the rule to a limited number of verbs (auxiliary or principal verbs). Later, he or she extends the rule, by making it apply both to an increasing range of verbs.

#### 4.1.3.3 Wh-questions

Traditional grammarians refer to "yes-no" questions as general questions, whereas Wh-questions are called specific questions since the specific constituent in the underlying questions are being questioned. There are at least nine Wh-questions in English (Celce-Murcia, Larsen-Freeman, 1983: 148).

- (1) Subject NP: What happened, who died?
- (2) Object NP: Who(m) did you see? What did you eat?
- (3) Object of preposition. Who(m) did you talk to? To whom did you talk?
- (4) Adverbials of time, place, manner, reason and means: When did you leave? Where did you go? How did she dance? Why is he crying? How did he get to school?
- (5) Demonstrative determiners: What/Which book do you want?
- (6) Possessive determiners: Whose book is that?
- (7) Quantity determiners: How many cars does he have? How much wine did he drink?

(8) Intensifiers: How smart is she? How fast can he run?

(9) Adjective phrase (state condition): How are you?

There is a fundamental difference between Wh-questions that focus on NP or the determiner of the subject NP and Wh-questions that focus on some element in the predicate, which includes everything in the nucleus of the subject. For example:

(a) Who died? Something in the subject NP is being questioned; i.e. someone died.

(b) Where are you going? Something in the predicate is questioned; i.e. You are going somewhere?

The first example is fairly easy to master, the second one is rather more difficult, and ESL learners trying to produce this sentence are likely to say: Where you are going? or You are going where?

In English, a number of changes take place by the application of a transformational rule called Wh-replacement rule.

Again, as we have seen with "yes-no" questions, the inversion rule is also applicable. An ESL learner who has difficulties in mastering "yes-no" questions, would definitely have problems with Wh-questions.

Modal auxiliaries are also inverted in either "yes-no" or Wh-question forms. Modal auxiliaries are one of the more difficult structures. ESL learners often generalise the verb/subject agreement rule for example, that third person singular present tense verbs in English require an -s ending. They apply this rule also when they make use of modal auxiliaries (can, will, shall, may, must). Modal auxiliaries are distinguished from other auxiliary verbs by their lack of tense with accompanying lack of subject verb agreement e.g.

(c) She can accompany you > Can she accompany you?

(d) He will come tomorrow > will he come tomorrow?

Let us examine the following sample tree diagram and derivation for Wh-questions using the sentence (b) above: Where are you going?

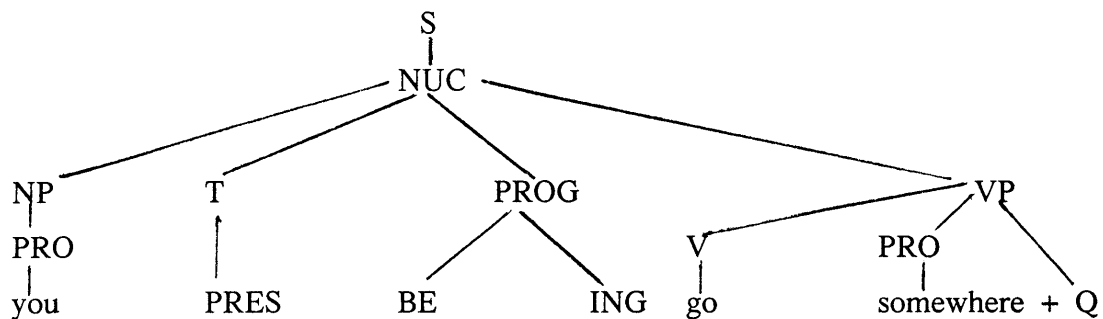


FIGURE 5: DERIVATION FOR WH-QUESTIONS

In English, the first rule to apply in this case is Wh-replacement:

- (1) Output of base: You pres be ing go somewhere + Q
- (2) Wh-replacement: You pres be ing go where
- (3) Wh-fronting: Where you pres be ing go
- (4) Subject/auxiliary inversion: Where be you pres go + ing
- (5) Affix attachment: Where be you pres go + ing

Subject-verb agreement and morphological rules: Where are you going?

On the other hand, African languages only have two major rules to derive the above Wh-question.

For example: Xitsonga (T)

isiZulu (Z)

T: Wena u ya kwihi? (where are you going?)

Z: Uya kuphi?

- Output of base.
1. Wena u ya **kun'wana** + Q (Xitsonga)  
Kukhona la uya khona + Q (isiZulu)  
You are going somewhere + Q





Park?), for eliciting information (Why are you late for class? What time is it?), and for eliciting vocabulary (What is the meaning of this word? What is this? What is this instrument?).

The verb BE in English is more highly inflected than other verbs and it can express the present through three forms: is, am, are. Past tense forms: was and were. These forms are the ones that are fronted in question forms. African languages as shown earlier in this section do not have the verb BE, but they make use of concords. In this case, the isiZulu and Xitsonga patterns suffice for all African languages as they are both tone languages. For example:

Xitsonga: (↗ = rising tone, ↘ = falling tone):

isiZulu

U tsákílè? Is she/he happy?

újábúlílè?

U tsàkìlè? Are you happy?

ùjàbùlìlè?

The first /U/ with a rising tone, means "she/he".

/U/ with a falling tone means "you" singular.

It should be noted at this point that no one expects a child learning his or her mother tongue or even ESL to produce from the earliest stages only forms which in native adult terms are correct or non-deviant.

The learner's incorrect usage of Wh-questions or Yes/No questions is seen as being evidence that he or she is in the process of acquiring language and indeed, for those who attempt to describe this knowledge of the language at any point in its development, it is the "errors" which provide the important evidence.

Studies drawn on for the description of interrogation are Ravem (1974), Wode (1978) and Butterworth and Hatch (1978). These studies show that there is an early "non-communicative" stage during which the learner is not able to produce any spontaneous

interrogatives, but just repeats a question someone has asked. For example,

Adult: Are you eating fish?

Learner: (repeats): I am eating fish?

Ellis (1985) maintains that the first productive questions are intonation questions, i.e. utterances with declarative word order such as the example given above. This is spoken with a rising intonation.

He further indicates that at this stage there are also some Wh-questions, but they appear to have been learnt as ready-made chunks.

The next development sees the appearance of productive Wh-questions. At this stage, Ellis claims that there is no subject/verb inversion as we have seen from the examples provided throughout this section. The auxiliary verb is often omitted. For example,

(a)\* where you are going? instead of "where are you going?"

(b)\* what the time? instead of "what (is) the time?"

Furthermore, Ellis claims that somewhat later, inversion occurs in Yes/No questions and in Wh-questions. Inversion with BE tends to occur before inversion with DO.

In addition, Ellis maintains that embedded questions are the last to develop. When they first appear, they have a subject/verb inversion, as in ordinary Wh-questions: e.g.

(c)\* I tell you what did happen

(d)\* I don't know where do you live

(e)\* I wonder what do you want

(f)\* Where you are going this afternoon

(g)\* Your name is what

It is only later on that the learner successfully differentiate the word order of ordinary and embedded Wh-questions. This of course depends on the availability of competent

ESL teachers, otherwise fossilisation would take place before the learner acquires embedded questions.

Lastly, the development of the rules of interrogation is gradual, involving overlapping stages and the slow replacement of transitional forms.

#### 4.1.4 The English tense aspect system

Whereas tense relates to the time when an activity or state occurs, Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman (1983) maintain that aspect in a language comments upon some characteristic of the activity or state. They further argue that tense and aspect in English can either be viewed semantically or structurally. The verb system of English can be approached in terms of its forms. This in their view refers to inflections and structures it makes use of. In the structural sense one can use the inflections with finite verbs to express past, present or future time. Given this background, they maintain that English has only two tense forms - past and present. They further explain that it does not have a grammatical future tense, since future time is expressed using auxiliary verbs or adverbs of time in conjunction with the present tense instead of a grammatical future tense e.g. work - work-**ed** (past tense)

I work - I **will** work (future tense)

English therefore, has two structural aspectual markers - the progressive aspect and the perfective aspect. English makes use of the auxiliary BE plus the present participle (-ING) to mark the progressive aspect.

For example:

They complete their homework (present tense, no aspect).

They **are** complet**ing** their homework.

BE ... ING (Present tense + Progressive aspect).

Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman (1983: 61) warn that the language teacher must be concerned with meaning as well as form. They maintain that the meaning of tenses entails a language specific way of dealing with time and the relationship of events and

interlocutors to time.

They argue that over the years, English teachers and some traditional grammarians have blurred the formal distinctions between time, tense and aspect. Instead they have tended to refer to the twelve traditional English tenses.

- (1) Simple present: He walks to school.
- (2) Present progressive or continuous: I am walking now.
- (3) Single past: She walked to school this morning.
- (4) Past progressive: John was writing a letter at 10:00.
- (5) Simple future: Mary will post the letter tomorrow.
- (6) Future progressive: I will be driving my car at 4:00 tomorrow evening.
- (7) Present perfect: I have been a student since 1980.
- (8) Present perfect progressive: I have been ill for two years now.
- (9) Past perfect: He had already completed his homework before I could assist him.
- (10) Past perfect progressive: He had been driving to town before he lost his job.
- (11) Future perfect: I will have finished my homework by 6:00 tomorrow.
- (12) Future perfect progressive: He will have been driving his car to school for a year by the time he finishes his examinations.

ESL learners have a great deal of difficulty in mastering the English tense aspect system because tense systems are language specific. Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman claim that tenses 1 through 8 are more frequent to the ESL learner than 9 through 12. But 9-12 tense systems are still important. They further claim that tenses 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 should be viewed as the core system. ESL teachers focus exclusively on these tenses.

For example tense 7 (Present perfect) would often be confused with tenses 2 and 3 in ESL usage (Simple present/past tense). This is also frequent in Afrikaans English (B and C):

A: I have been a teacher since 1970.

\*B: I was a teacher since 1970.

\*C: I am a teacher since 1970.

Tenses 9 to 12 are the most difficult tenses for ESL learners even for educated non-native speakers.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman suggest that if one is working with beginning or low-intermediate level students, one may choose to introduce them to the sentence level uses of these twelve tenses. They argue that once the students appear comfortable with these, they should be helped to view tense usage from a higher or discourse level, perspective.

They further argue that from the semantic point of view, the traditional approach to tense and aspect is superior to the structural approach since a greater number of meaningful distinctions can be made using the traditional approach. The structural approach is limited in that it views both tense and time as linear.

← past - present - future →

This structural approach is not useful for the ESL teacher. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman, ESL teachers usually teach one tense at a time with a focus on the form. The learners find it difficult to link one tense to another. Tenses are one of our abiding teaching problems.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman point out that black English users (even some whites) normally jump from present tense to past tense to future tense within one and the same discourse. This according to them, may be caused by the fact that they have learned the English tense system bit by bit at the sentence level without learning how the pieces interact in longer discourse. Specific discourse training is needed for black ESL learners, Afrikaans students and also for some English mother tongue speakers.

In 1960 William Bull (in Celce-Murcia & Larsen Freeman, 1983: 68) developed a comprehensive model for explaining the substitutes of the Spanish tense aspect system

at the discourse level. This framework can be applied to any language. It was called the Bull framework. The following are three of four axes of time - present, past and future according to William Bull.

Axis of orientation	A time before the basic axis time	Basic axis time corresponding to the moment of reference	A time after the basic axis time
Future time	Before 5:00 he will have finished all the chores (Future perfect)	He will/is going to eat dinner at 5:00 (Simple future)	After 5:00 he will/is going to watch TV (No distinction form - use Simple future)
Present time	He has played golf since 1960 (Present perfect)	He plays golf (Simple present) or is playing golf at the moment	He is going to play golf next Sunday (Future of the present)
Past time	Before playing golf he had finished all his chores (Past perfect)	He played golf on Saturday afternoon (Simple past)	After playing golf, he went out to dinner with his golf buddies (No distinct form - use Simple past)

**TABLE 5: THE BULL FRAMEWORK**

Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman maintain that each axis has a neutral or basic form and two possible marked forms, one signalling the time "before" the other signalling a time "after" the basic time of that axis. The Bull framework permits an analysis that is like the traditional accounts that meaning has priority over form.

The Bull framework according to them, is more sophisticated and subtle than the usual structural system of the English tense aspect in that it uses the perfective aspect as a tense marker of a time "before" in each of the various axes, with the result that the progressive is analyzed as the only marker of aspect in the English tense - aspect







verbs: e.g.

- \* Weak verbs: the past tense is formed with the suffix -d or -t (played, kicked, burnt)
- \* strong verbs: no -d or -t but only a vowel change (broke, sang, read, led)
- \* mixed verbs: both a vowel change and suffix -d or -t (bought, fought, spent)

When the learning process does not progress normally as a result of for example, poor language teaching and lack of exposure to mother tongue speakers, certain developmental "errors" which occur regularly in first and second language acquisition, become permanent features or fossilized. The present perfect tense has also to be taught to Afrikaans students and it gives some problems with English speaking students too.

ESL teachers therefore have a very difficult task. They need adequate training, support and a thorough theoretical understanding and should be able to adapt to a variety of practical contexts. Some specific training is usually needed for discourse.

The following errors are found mainly at the mesolectal and acrolectal levels of the cline. They cannot be regarded as a new variety. They are errors which must be corrected by the education system.

1. **Non-count as count nouns** (Gough, 1996: 61)

- . You must put more effort into your work > \*You must put more **efforts** into your work.
- . She was carrying luggage > \*She was carrying **a luggage**.

Some of these errors are found at the acrolectal level of the cline. It does not mean that every ESL user at the mesolectal and acrolectal levels makes the same errors.

2. **Extension of the progressive**

- . Even racism exists > \*Even racism is still existing
- . Men dominate the key positions in education > \*Men are still dominating some of the positions in education
- . She loves him very much > \*She was loving him very much

These errors are also prevalent at the higher level of the cline.

### 3. Gender conflation in pronouns

- . He came to see me yesterday > \*She came to see me yesterday (instead of **he**)
- . He will speak to **her** tomorrow > \*She will speak to **him** tomorrow (instead of **he** and **her**)

Some of the black students with high matric symbols have trouble with the gender of English pronouns: **he**, **she**, **his**, **hers**, **him** and **her** as illustrated above (3).

Finally, the multitude of "errors" we have seen in this chapter (c.f. Sections 4.1.1 - 4.1.4) made by some second language users who have been denied good educational opportunities cannot simply be described as a new variety of English. These "errors" exist alongside an "acrolectal" form. In Chapter 9, we focus on ESL teacher education. It is shown that if teachers are adequately trained with adequate resources, a number of these problems will be minimised. At the moment, some of the "errors" are made by the teachers themselves. What needs to be done to rectify the present situation is the restructuring and rationalisation of teacher colleges in South Africa and the establishment of effective ESL teacher in-service training programmes and improvement of pre-service training. There is also a need for retraining of some of the teachers.

#### 4.1.5 Conclusion

Selinker (in Ellis, 1985: 48) noted that many ESL learners - as many as 95% - fail to reach target language competence. In other words, they do not reach the end of the interlanguage continuum. They stop learning "when their interlanguage contains at least

some rules different from those of the target language system". Earlier in this study, we have referred to this as "fossilisation" which occurs in most ESL learners. Ellis claims that fossilisation cannot be remedied by further instruction. It must be stressed that this does not mean that the ESL variety becomes a new language. The point worth mentioning here is that the aim of the ESL learners should be to attain the "acrolectal" level of proficiency which is part of an "educated" form of English close to the international standard English.

Ellis further maintains that fossilised structures can be realised as "errors" or as "correct" target language forms. He further demonstrates that if, when fossilisation occurs, the learner has reached a stage of development in which feature "X" in his or her interlanguage has assumed the acrolectal level of proficiency, then the "correct" form will be attained. On the other hand, he claims that if the learner has reached a stage in which feature "y" still does not reach the "acrolectal" level, the fossilisation will manifest itself as "error" provided that the fossilisation is not lower down the cline. This normally occurs at the "mesolectal" level of proficiency.

Furthermore, Ellis makes a pertinent point that ESL learners' interlanguage system is permeable in the sense that rules that constitute the learner's knowledge at one stage are not fixed, but are open to amendment. It is for this same reason that ESL varieties are not codifiable as highlighted in the preceding chapters. Littlewood (1984) concurs with this view when he says that normally, we expect a learner to progress further along the learning continuum, so that his or her interlanguage moves closer and closer to the acrolectal level and contains fewer and fewer errors. On the other hand, Kachru (1985 - c.f. section 4.1) takes a different view that learner's interlanguage at any level of development (even at the lower end of the continuum) can become a norm for teaching. What Ellis and Littlewood perceive as "permeability" or "errors", Kachru in section 4.1 calls "innovations" by both English mother tongue users and the ESL learners. He gives these two types of what he perceives as "innovations":

- \* those initiated by the users of the "inner circle" (i.e. English native speakers)
- \* those initiated by the users of the "outer circle" (i.e. ESL users).

We have noted earlier (in section 4.1) that Kachru does not provide the examples to show what he means by "innovations initiated by the users of the inner circle" and the "outer circle". He also does not show how the ESL teacher should deal with this controversy in the classroom situation. Kachru does not mention anything about "fossilization". It is probably implied in his concept of "innovations", "creativity" and his "allowable deviations". These issues are further discussed in section 5.3.

Some of the factors which cause fossilisation have been described earlier in this study:

- \* transfer of errors through training (i.e. a rule enters the learner's system as a result of instruction. In other words, it is caused by the teacher)
- \* the level of the learner's education
- \* the type of teachers the learner is exposed to
- \* crowded classrooms
- \* shortage of good instructional materials that are appropriate to the various maturity levels of the learners
- \* the economic deprivation of the learners. Economic poverty prevents students from acquiring the experiences which accelerate ESL learning. For example, poor nutrition, family breakdown, restricted experiential backgrounds, severe emotional problems and lack of back-up resources at home (reading books, electricity, television etc)
- \* poor tertiary education

There is therefore no cogent justification for the label "black English" (excluding accent) in South Africa if we base our judgement on the occurrence of 'errors' discussed in this chapter.

The factors listed above can be overcome or alleviated if skilled teachers are involved. Burt et al (1977: 92) point out that a good ESL teacher "constructs materials that are appropriate for the students' maturity level and the teacher's own teaching styles". They further make a crucial point that eliminating the effects of economic deprivation is the basis for academic success in language learning and all other subjects. They warn that

"as long as students are disadvantaged, their chances for success are slight".

Finally, they argue that eliminating deprivation or at least, finding ways to overcome the debilitating effects of economic deprivation is the main problem today in teaching standard English.

#### 4.2 VIEWPOINTS ON ESL PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

It has been shown in the preceding chapters that accent is no longer regarded as being part of the standard English debate.

The fact that accent is excluded from the standard English package, does not mean that it is less important and that it should be discarded from the ESL curriculum. However, it must be stated that dealing with the concept of "accent" is very contentious, especially in education. This point will be developed later.

"Accent" is often used to refer to phonological differences or "interference" from a different language. Interference is actually a major factor in ESL phonology acquisition.

Phonology is the component of language which deals with the sound system. We also have other components such as "semantics" (the system of meanings), morphology (the rules of word formation), "syntax" (the rules of sentence formation) and the dictionary or lexicon (vocabulary). The expected dictionary of SAE will use lexical items to define SAE.

All these language aspects are important to the ESL learner. The labels which sociolinguists usually use to describe different varieties of English, are mainly derived from "accent" differences. For example, the majority of South African Indians, blacks, Coloureds and Afrikaners have distinct and prominent ESL phonological features which are characteristic of the different and diverse linguistic groups.

Knowles (1987) maintains that the standardisation of pronunciation really began in the

late eighteenth century. He claims that faced with various pronunciations of the same word, elocutionists and orthoepists (those concerned with correct pronunciation) recommended their own pronunciation as the "correct" one and condemned others as "incorrect".

Knowles further claims that agreement in matters of pronunciation seems to have developed in the nineteenth century, especially in the public schools of the south of England. This has led to a widespread acceptance in England of one variety of pronunciation as a standard and this was adopted in the 1920s for broadcasting by the BBC. It is known as Received Pronunciation (RP). RP has had a powerful influence mainly on all regional dialects in England, although relatively few people speak it. RP cannot be pinned down to any region of England. All the former British colonies used Received Pronunciation in teaching and learning as their target or model. It was probably the basis for teaching English pronunciation elsewhere in the world.

Knowles makes an important point that the vast majority of English speakers today (native and non-native speakers) have a standardised variety of English pronunciation. For example, he indicates that in England (and even the Commonwealth countries) their pronunciation is likely to be influenced by RP, but retains some local flavour. In the ESL context the local flavour is caused by fossilisation. Knowles goes on to clarify the difference between 'accent' and other components of the language. He argues that "standard English" refers to the form of the language as a whole, and includes grammar and vocabulary, whereas mainstream announcers in broadcasting systems in the British area of influence use a pronunciation that is close to RP.

### **4.3 SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ESL PRONUNCIATION DEBATE**

The pronunciation of black ESL learners and speakers is markedly different from that of the RP speakers, although RP is supposed to be the model aimed at in schools. Gimson (1980) argues that RP continues for historical reasons to serve as a model in many parts of the world (including South Africa) and if a choice is made at all, the choice is still effectively between RP and American pronunciation.

There is in fact a range of black pronunciation which shows certain phonological features because of the phonological systems of the black languages. These black ESL features or approximations towards RP, depend on the background of the individual speakers. In other words, his or her level of education, lack of or availability of the RP model at home or in the classroom situation.

Many black ESL teachers have become sceptical and disillusioned with pronunciation teaching. There is a misconception that by teaching grammar and lexis, you are automatically teaching pronunciation. It is therefore conceived that there is no need for teaching pronunciation. Both ESL teachers and learners at times feel that it is a waste of the "real English" language teaching time. One of the main reasons which accounts for this pessimistic attitude is lack of success in teaching pronunciation itself.

Deviant black pronunciation is more marked in sentence stress patterns and intonation than in pronunciation shown in individual words. The following sections focus mainly on these two broad phonological areas.

#### **4.3.1 The whole question of stress-timed and syllable-timed languages**

The two processes of stress-timed and syllable-timed forms "are co-ordinated in different ways in different languages, and the way in which they are combined produces a language's "rhythm", which is fundamentally a matter of timing" among languages, a distinction is often drawn between "stress-timing" and syllable-timing as to "whether the foot or the syllable is taken as the unit of time" (Richards, 1992: 869).

The concept of "rhythm" is derived from Latin "rhythmus" which means (Richards, 1992: 869):

- \* The flow and beat of such things as sound, melody, speech and art.
  
- \* In music, the arrangement of beats and lengths of notes, shown in notation as



bass or groups of beats, the first beat of each bar carrying stress e.g. //dozens of/old/photographs//, "dozens of" takes about the same time to say as "old". In other words, the unit of rhythm known as the foot has about the same duration irrespective of the number of syllables it contains. In a syllable-timed rhythm (black languages), timing is based on the syllable - each syllable carries equal length.

- \* In poetry, the arrangement of words into a more or less regular sequence of long and short syllables.
- \* In phonetics, the sense of movement in speech, consisting of the stress, quantity and timing of syllables.

All English words have stress patterns which are quite stable when the word is pronounced in isolation. It is also quite disastrous to interpret an utterance in which a word is pronounced with the wrong stress pattern. For example "important" and "impotent".

- \* "He is an important guest" could be mispronounced as "He is an impotent guest" (this comment can actually embarrass, hurt or offend the person referred to).

The misplacement of stress patterns could result in provocation, misunderstanding and communication breakdown. Words do not often occur naturally in isolation. They are embedded in the stream of speech. The phonetics of connected speech is the same as that of individual words. In order to be intelligible in speech, the learner has to master the phonetic characteristics of connected speech.

As it is well known, English is not one of those languages where word stress can be decided simply in relation to the syllables of the word, as can be done in black languages - where the syllable before the last - the penultimate syllable is stressed and all vowels have full value.

For example, (isiZulu):

Uyahhamba > he/she is going

Uhamble > he/she has left

In English generally, the function of stress is to mark the meaning words that carry the meaning of the utterance. For example:

I **won't** be **able** to **come** to **school** on **Monday**

In this example, the stressed syllables are much louder, longer, more prominent in pitch and very precisely articulate. The unstressed syllables on the other hand are comparatively obscure. It is widely agreed that the unstressed syllables are a very difficult thing to teach to ESL learners. The difficulties arise for various reasons. In black languages there is no vowel reduction, each syllable is pronounced with the same amount of stress as all the other syllables and the notion of linguistic stress is completely unknown - it just does not apply in these languages.

Brown (1977) argues that the difficulty is that a quite new linguistic concept has to be taught from scratch. She claims that for students who are accustomed to bundling consonants and vowels into successive syllables and pronouncing them all equally distinctly, equally loudly, and equally long, the sudden demand that they should combine some consonants and vowels into stressed syllables and some into unstressed syllables seems pointless and arbitrary. Furthermore, students not used to a stress system will have great difficulty in following spoken native English speech with the rapid flow of unstressed syllables (this is also part of Brown's point).

Roach (1983) claims that weak syllables in English can only have four types of centres (c.f. Figure 9(a)):

a, the vowel Schwa - ə

b, a close front unrounded vowel in the general area of i: and I

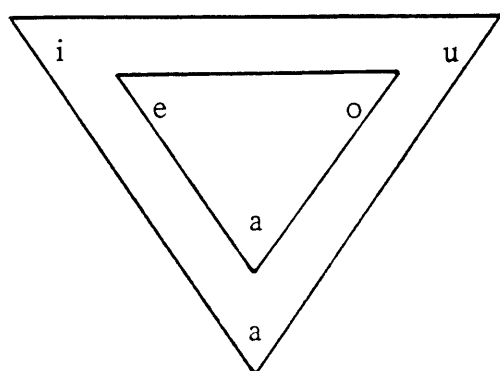
c, a close back rounded vowel in the general area of u:ʊ and

d, a syllabic consonant. ɫ

Roach maintains that when we compare weak syllables containing vowels with strong syllables, we find that the vowel in a weak syllable tends to be shorter, or of lower intensity and different in quality. For example, a black speaker of English would use short vowels and reduced vowels in the place of full and long vowels:

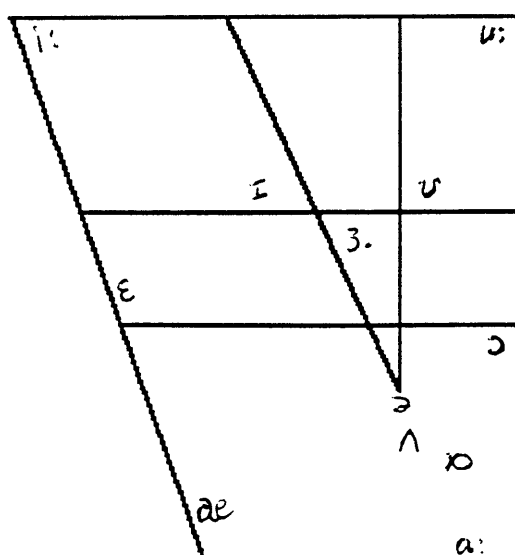
interested > **interested**

ESL pronunciation is highly influenced by vowels found in the learner's mother tongue. The diagramme below depicts the primary and secondary vowels found generally in all black languages:

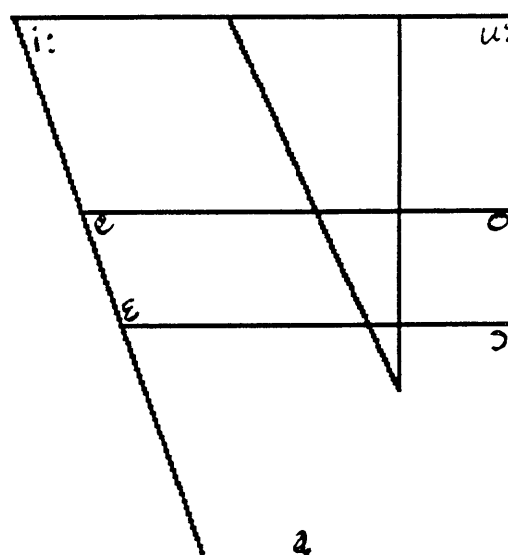


**FIGURE 8 : PRIMARY AND SECONDARY VOWELS**

RP on the other hand, has the following simple vowel sounds.



**FIGURE 9(a): VOWEL CHART:  
RP**



**FIGURE 9(b): VOWEL CHART:  
BLACK LANGUAGES**

In figures 9(a) and 9(b), we have the simple vowels of standard English and of the black languages respectively. Black languages do not have central vowels. Black ESL speakers try to find alternative tongue positions approximate to their own system. The problem seems to centre on central vowels because the black languages have tense vowels only.

Problems with the complex vocalic system of English are intensified by the diphthongs. Diphthongs are vowel glides, the movement of the tongue from one position to another is smooth, not a disjointed jump.

Black languages do not have diphthongs. Where two vowels are together a discontinuous jump occurs. The natural tendency in some of the ESL speakers is to eliminate the glide. In other words, diphthongs are turned into simple vowels at the starting point of the glide - for example, "fair hair" becomes /fɛ: hɛ:/ instead of /fɛə hɛə/. This is characteristic of SAE (white) and "Afrikaans English". The following table, compares ESL and Received Pronunciation sound systems and substitution of the RP vowels by fewer vowels found in black languages:

PRONUNCIATION		SPELLING	WORD EXAMPLES
<b>BLACK VOCALIC EQUIVALENT ESL</b>	<b>RP</b>	<b>Standard</b>	
/ a: /	/ ae /	a	cat, salmon
	/ a: /	a ar al ear	after, fast park, arm half, palm heart
	/ ə /	a er or our	about, among letter, father actor, tutor favour, honour
/ ɛ /	/ ʌ /	u o	bus, gun, hut above, come, love

PRONUNCIATION		SPELLING	WORD EXAMPLES
<b>BLACK VOCALIC EQUIVALENT ESL</b>	<b>RP</b>	<b>Standard</b>	
/ɛ/ for /ɜ:/ shortened + fronted	/ɜ:/	ir er or	first, thirst, church serve, stern, fur work, worm
		e ur	bed, pet, red fur
/ɔ/ also shortened	/ɔ:/	aw	yawn, caught, bought
	/ɒ/	o au ou	hot, slot pot, hot, was
/i:/ often shortened	/i:/	ee ie ei oe ea	meet, feet, perceive amoeba, sieze cease, peace, peas meat, heat
	/ɪ/	i e	six, pin revision
/u/	/u:/	oo ue u	food, noon true, blue rude, rubric
		/ʊ/	u o oo

**TABLE 6: COMPARISON OF ESL AND RP SOUND SYSTEMS**

Titlestad (1996: 50 - his notes) illustrates shortened long vowels in South African Pronunciation. The long, high front, tense vowel [i:] is quite often shortened to [i] and then mistaken for [ɪ] (which is always short in RP).

He further gives examples of shortened long vowels especially by ESL learners:

- \* each > itch
- \* peace > piss
- \* meek > mick
- \* beach > bitch
- \* field > filled
- \* these > this

He demonstrates the confusion that can arise in an ESL context, especially the last example (these/this). The voiced terminal consonant of **these** [z] tends to be unvoiced to [s]. Titlestad maintains that the confusion of these two words is apparent in writing, too.

The long vowel [ : ] also tends to be shortened. The long central vowel [ " ] as in **bird** tends to be shortened and fronted to [ ] as in **bed**.

A few broad features of consonantal differences must be mentioned although the consonants give fewer problems.

We can further illustrate the fact that two languages can have the same set of phonetic segments with different phonemic systems by examining the voiceless stops. English has both aspirated and unaspirated voiceless stops. The voiceless aspirated stops [p<sup>h</sup>] [t<sup>h</sup>] [k<sup>h</sup>] and the voiceless unaspirated stops [p] [t] [k] are in complementary distribution in English as is shown by stating the contexts in which they occur:

word initially			after a word initial		
[p <sup>h</sup> ]	[t <sup>h</sup> ]	[k <sup>h</sup> ]	[p]	[t]	[k]
pill	till	kill	spill	still	skill
[p <sup>h</sup> il]	[t <sup>h</sup> il]	[k <sup>h</sup> il]	[spil]	[stil]	[skil]

Both aspirated and unaspirated voiceless stops occur in English and black languages, but they function differently in the two languages. In English, the voiceless aspirated

stops as noted above, occur only word initially, whereas the unaspirated stops only occur word medially and word finally. In black languages, these stops are not in complementary distribution but they occur in the same positions in minimal pairs. For example, (Xitsonga):

[P <sup>h</sup> ]		[p <sup>h</sup> ]	
<u>Ph</u> aka "to receive gifts"		X <u>iph</u> ato	"poem"

[p]		[p]	
<u>P</u> aka "pack"			"ghost"

[K<sup>h</sup>]  
Khana "pluck fruit/vegetables"

[k]  
kana "draw water"

The voiceless unaspirated and the voiceless aspirated stops in black languages (e.g. Xitsonga) as noted earlier are not in complementary distribution as they occur in the same positions in the minimal pairs above; they contrast in Xitsonga. Almost all the black languages in South Africa display similar phonemic patterns - they do not show any complementary distribution. This difference between English and black languages does not cause significant intelligibility problems. It is interesting to note that many of the Xhosa English speakers, do not aspirate the voiceless stops which occur word initially e.g. kill [k<sup>h</sup>il] and skill [skil] become [kil] and [skil] respectively. However, this does not cause serious intelligibility problems.

It is evident from the examples shown earlier in this study that a lot of intelligibility problems could be created by deviation in vowel sounds and diphthongs. It was noted in chapter 3 that accent or pronunciation does not form part of standard English. Earlier in this chapter (in Section 4.2) it was highlighted that the fact that accent is excluded from the standard English package does not mean that it is less important.

Finally, it is worthwhile to note that RP has a wide range of vocalic sounds, it has about 26 sounds made up of 17 simple vowels and 9 diphthongs. In English spelling,

these are indicated by various combinations of the letters in the spelling alphabet a, e, i, o, u. It is therefore important for ESL teachers to teach these 26 RP vocalic sounds because at the moment, RP is still the only model used in all the commonwealth countries.

#### 4.3.2 Intonation

Black languages are tone languages whereas English is an intonation language. Tone of words in black languages is significant. Tone is semantic, that means it is a factor governing the meanings of words. For example, the concord "u" in "uyakuphi" (you are going where?), with a rising tone refers to the third person, whereas with a falling tone it refers to the second person. Furthermore, many suggestions have been made for ways of isolating different functions of intonations. Among the most often proposed are the following (Roach, 1983: 136):

- \* Intonation enables us to express emotions and attitudes as we speak, and this adds a special kind of meaning to spoken language. This is called the "attitudinal function" of intonation. In other words, the same sentence can be said in different ways to express anger, happiness, boredom etc.
- \* Intonation helps to produce the effect of prominence on syllables that need to be perceived as stressed. This has been called the "accentual function". This means that for the purpose of emphasis, we place the tonic stress in different positions in a sentence.
- \* The listener is better able to recognise the grammar and syntactic structure of what is being said by using the information contained in the intonation. This has been called the "grammatical function" of intonation. This means inventing sentences which when written are ambiguous.
- \* Looking at the act of speaking in a broader way, we can see that intonation can signal to the listener what is to be taken as "new" information and what is



already "given". Such functions are examples of intonation's "discourse function". This means that sentences form part of some larger act of conversational interaction between two speakers.

In this study we will only give Roach's examples of accentual and grammatical functions.

A. **Accentual function:**

- a, / It was very boring /
- b, / It was **very** boring /
- c / It **was** very boring /

For contrastive purposes, any word may become the tonic syllable. In order to accentuate different messages, you stress the syllables of that word.

The majority of the ESL black learners do not make use of this contrast. In black languages, word order is used for this purpose.

B. **Grammatical function**

- a, / Those who sold **quickly** /, made a profit /
- b, / Those who **sold**, / quickly made a profit /

The difference caused by the placement of the tone unit boundary is seen to be equivalent to giving two different paraphrases of the sentences as in:

- a, A profit was made by those who sold quickly
- b, A profit was quickly made by those who sold.

In English, it is usual to illustrate the grammatical function by inventing sentences which when written are ambiguous, and whose ambiguity can only be removed by using differences of intonation. Some black ESL speakers would not easily detect this ambiguity.

### 4.3.3 Communicative effectiveness of stress and intonation in black ESL

Today it is widely accepted that, more than in segmental phonology, deviance in prosodic phonology has serious consequences affecting the intelligibility and comprehensibility of spoken English.

The prosodic features are (Lanham, 1984: 60):

1. Stress: auditory prominence of syllables
2. Pitch levels and contours: rise and fall
3. Pause: often momentary breaks in the flow of speech

Lanham maintains that more recently there has been a concern for the communicative effect of error and error gravity, measured against the consequences of error on the comprehensibility of contextualized discourse.

He points out that the significant functions of English stress and intonation are discourse functions. Lanham argues that deviance from native English norms affects "pragmatic" functions by which meaning supplied by lexical semantics and syntactic relations expressed in sentences or utterances in the discourse, acquires communicative value.

"Pragmatics" according to Lanham, refers to:

- \* principled ways of incorporating information deriving from extralinguistic context
- \* interrelating information units within the discourse
- \* illocutionary force given to sentences and sequences of sentences.

Lanham's study of deviance and its consequences in English spoken by South African blacks is based on the comprehensibility of a text (c.f. Text A) read by a black ESL speaker (Lanham, 1984:227-228).

Lanham (1994:218) maintains that the reader of the text is "typical of a large number of black South Africans who, during the past 30 years, have acquired the foundations of English entirely by being taught it by black teachers in school." Lanham also acknowledges that there are black South Africans outside the category of this reader whose control of English prosody approaches that of mother tongue users.

It is also noted that prosodic deviance is not confined to non-native users. Some younger white English using announcers of the South African Broadcasting Corporation deviate from the norms of English stress and intonation.

The reader of the text was a young man who had passed the matriculation examination and was studying English in the first year of a university course. The text was a comprehension passage used in the course and the reader was thoroughly familiar with its contents when he read it. He had had extensive contact with mother tongue English speakers since leaving school.

One reason for choosing the text was that in encoding, the non-native speaker did not incur errors of word choice or sentence structure. By eliminating possible error in lexis and syntax, incomprehensibility became mainly a matter of production. It was ensured that the reader fully comprehended what he was reading; otherwise difficulties with the meaning of a text could have been the source of deviance.

The passage was entitled "Listening to Music". Prosodic cues in English mark off the boundaries of discourse units at three levels:

- \* tone unit
- \* tone unit sequence
- \* paragraph

#### **LISTENING TO MUSIC (Text A)**

1. //LISTening to MUSic//is such a MUDDle//that one scarcely KNOWS//how to

- FIRST
2. START //The point to get//clear//in my OWN case// ~ is  
desCRIBing it.
3. THAT//during the GREATER part//of EVERY performance//I do NOT attend.//
- NICE SOUNDS
4. The make me think of something else.//i wool-GATHER//MOST  
5. of the time//and AM surprised that// ~ OTHERS DON'T.//ProFESSIONal CRITics//  
6. can LISTen to a PIECE//as CONSTANTly\*//and as STEADily//as IF//they were
- SEEMS
7. READING//a CHAPter in a NOVel.//This to me//an aMAZing feat// and  
8. PROBABly//they ONLY achieve it//through intellectual training.// ~ THAT  
9. is to say//they FIND in the music//the EQUIVAlent of a plot.//They are  
10. FOLLOwing//the ground base//or exPECTing//the THEME//to RE-ENTer//in the
- KEEPS them
11. DOMinant//and SO on//and this //on the rails.//But i FLY OFF//  
12. EVERY minute.//After a BAR//or TWO//i THINK//how MUSical i am//or of
- MIGHT
13. SOMETHing SMART//i have said//in converSATION// ~ or i WONDer  
14. WHAT// //DEAD//a COUPle of CENTuries// ~ can be FEELing//as the  
the comPOSer
- HOW SOON
15. FLAMES//on the ALTar//still FLICKer UP.//Or //an H.E.//  
BOMB//would
16. //NOT to MENtion//more obvious distractions.// ~ The  
EXTinguish them
17. TILT//of the//soprano's CHIN//or CHINS;// ~ the ANTics of the conDUCTor.//  
18. that imPASSioned BEEtle.//eSPECIally when it is //and he  
NIGHT TIME
19. WAVes // ~ the affectATION//of the PIANist//when he takes a top  
his SHARDS;
20. note with difficulty// ~ as if HE TOO were//a soPRANO;//the BACKS of the  
21. CHAIRS;//the BUMPS on the CEILING;//the EXTreme PHYSical UGLiness of

22. the AUDience.//a CLASSical AUDience is SUREly the plainest collection  
23. of people//ANywhere aSSEMBled//for ANy common purpose.//Contributing my  
24. QUOTa, //i have the RIGHT to point this out.// COMPARE us with a gang//of  
25. NAVVies//or with an//OFFice STAFF and you will be//upHELD\*.

Notes:

- (a) \* marks misreading of the text  
(b) ~ marks neutral (i.e. level) tone. All other (unmarked) tone units have proclaiming (falling) tone.

Deviance in focus placement in this passage above, occurs where words which are not "informing" in the information flow receive prominence and where words warranting focus are overlooked. The focusing of words which have little or no informing value creates uncertainty in the decoder as to where the information flow is leading.

Deviance in focus and intonation contributed to the failure of listeners to the black ESL reading to identify contrast as the overall function of propositions through which main parts of the discourse are relatable.

The first term in the contrast is first identified in line 2 which was read as:

OWN  
//in my case//

The black ESL reading made "own" prominent, but missed the contrastive function of high key.

The comprehensibility of the reading of the passage "Listening to Music" above was tested in groups of competent users of English totalling 15 (13 mother tongue speakers and 2 black South Africans).

The tape recording of the black South African English reading of the text was played

after drawing attention to the title of the passage and indicating that comprehension of the passage was to be tested. After hearing the passage, questions in a written comprehension test were answered and this was followed by the tape-recorded reading of the same passage in native English and the answering of the same questions.

The first of three questions in the test was directed at the global theme of the passage and asked for a statement of: "the main thrust of the passage; an overall statement which would make sense of any single sentence in the passage".

The second attempted to elicit what was seen as the function served by the propositions contained in the passage.

The third question called for an explanation as to how two sentences widely separated in the text were related.

Eight respondents to the black South African English reading indicated that they had not comprehended sufficiently to answer any of the questions; these included the two black South Africans. The remaining seven heard the text as a list of distractions. Global theme and function were not acceptably identified by any.

The responses to the black South African English reading revealed an almost complete failure to convey the coherence of the text and a loss of a good deal of its information content.

There were accent errors in the reading of the text which resulted in unintelligibility, for example "on the rails" (line 11) with no differences in loudness between the three words. All were lower or equal in loudness to preceding unprominent syllables.

At the level of isolated words, errors in accent did not have serious consequences; for example, extinguish (line 16) presented no difficulty to the listeners.

The focusing of words which have little or no informing value creates uncertainty in

the decoder as to where the information flow is leading. Glaring examples of unwarranted focus are:

- \* line 4, most
- \* line 5, am
- \* line 7, seems
- \* line 8, that
- \* line 13, might

In summing up, a competent or proficient English speaker should be able to produce at least four levels of prominence in spoken discourse:

- \* stress
- \* phonetically a composite of vowel duration
- \* loudness
- \* pitch rise of brief duration

However, this does not mean that those who are unable to produce these levels of prominence should be regarded as "incompetent". It is important to note that there are many competent standard English users (excluding pronunciation) internationally who may not produce the above-mentioned prominence levels. These levels are useful as indicated earlier, for the ESL teachers and examiners because they need practical guidelines.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

It is important to once more highlight the fact that accent is no longer regarded as being part of the standard English debate. Deviations from English phonology are on the whole easy to detect in ESL black speakers as noted earlier in this chapter, proponents of South African black English tend to focus mainly on pronunciation when they argue for the acceptance and recognition of this "variety". The evidence we have in the field of "black English" largely consists of coinages and other lexical modifications, and the

listing of isolated examples of grammatical divergence.

The following examples indicate some of the reasons which account for deviations from English phonology:

- \* that deviant features may be due to conflict between spelling conventions of mother tongue and ESL e.g. Xitsonga "teka" > "take"
- \* the influence of hyper-correct pronunciation habits among elite ESL speakers
- \* the influence of native English dialectal pronunciations
- \* purely mispronunciations. For example, the words "park" and "pack" are quite often confused by many black ESL speakers. They quite often mispronounce the word "park":
  - a, "I want to **pack** my car in the garage", instead of  
"I want to **park** my car in the garage".

This is a result, partly, of the shortening of long RP vowels:

[a:] > [ɒ].

In another context, they quite possibly say:

b, The children are playing in the **park** [pa:k] (not in the **pack**).

Generally speaking, this type of communication, the sounds of speech, their making and their comprehension by the listener, must receive more attention than it has hitherto.

However, the problem of promoting pronunciation teaching and learning in South Africa becomes difficult in black education because of limited contact with mother tongue speakers of standard English, limited access to the media and other educational infrastructure.



Furthermore, there are inadequate teaching materials, the lack of a well-defined accent that is to be used on them and the kind of detailed phonetic target that is aimed at. Concerns that are quite often raised by teachers are:

- \* Should one teach the English stress patterns?
- \* Should one try to teach the glides of diphthongs? Should one teach intonation?
- \* Should one be content with tense vowels only and not bother about central vowels?

In other words, which aspects of phonology should the teacher aim at? Gillian Brown (1983) criticises some of the approaches concerned with the teaching of the production of correct stress patterns. She claims that already many teachers use taped or record courses of stress exercises spoken by native speakers. Often students are required to mimic the patterns offered by these courses without having paused to consider just what it is that they are mimicking. She ultimately points out that it is not surprising that these exercises turn out to be fairly fruitless.

In addition, Brown (1983) argues that it is useful to analyse stressed syllable by stressed syllable and some sample patterns before the students begin the mimicking exercise. The aim here is to make the student aware of different ways of marking stress, and to recognise stress and unstress rapidly and accurately enough to help him or her work out the structure of the message he or she is listening to.

In summing up, we can say that the important thing in pronunciation is not whether a sound can be produced adequately in isolation, but how well it is formed in the phonological contexts in which it occurs in the target language. The learner's task in acquiring a second language is not so much to reach a native speaker's standard of pronunciation. It is unrealistic to expect this. The ESL learner, needs to acquire a pronunciation that is accurate enough for the significant sounds to be distinctive from one another. Pupils must be able to make themselves understood to English speakers

and must be able to understand English speakers.

#### 4.5 THE PRONUNCIATION DEBATE - A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Stern (1992) claims that in learning a foreign language, pronunciation has always been an early obstacle to overcome.

He further argues that until the last decades of the nineteenth century, the majority of foreign language courses did not pay too much attention to this problem. He also points out that pronunciation teaching, if it played a role at all, was thus only a preparatory task for getting as quickly as possible to the real problem of language teaching (the foreign language grammar).

The late nineteenth century reform movement led to a radical change in the approach to pronunciation teaching in that it became a central preoccupation for the early stages of ESL instruction. The main objective for teaching beginners was to give them a "correct" pronunciation, and in doing this the newly invented phonetic notations were given a key role. Others went to the extent of insisting on exclusive use of phonetic script for the first one or two years. They believed that the language should be offered through a phonetic notation avoiding conventional spelling in order to forestall any "contamination" of spelling-pronunciation through misinterpretation of the standard orthography. The new approach had been introduced to encourage a good pronunciation and as a means of avoiding spelling confusions.

During the early years of the twentieth century, some of the enthusiasm for phonetics was lost. Stern (1992) argues that the use of phonetic script in the early stages did not produce the faultless pronunciation that had been expected. Instead, it tended to confuse and irritate language learners who either mistook the phonetic notation for the spelling system of the new language or who had grown impatient with these preliminaries and wanted to get on to "real English".

While phonetics declined in school-level language courses, it continued to develop as

an academic discipline at university level and also in the phonetic training of advanced language learners and future language teachers. In many ways, these courses had a remedial character in that they attempted to eliminate ingrained defects of pronunciation.

Since the 1960's a practical compromise established itself in the teaching of pronunciation which still prevails today. It was recommended that pronunciation teaching must form an important component of the language syllabus.

Much attention was paid to sound discrimination as well as to the productive aspect of pronunciation training. Emphasis was also laid on segmental phonemes, phonemic contrast and contractive analysis.

#### **4.6 BASIC ISSUES IN PRONUNCIATION TEACHING**

The sociolinguistic view of language has brought about several important changes in the definition of objectives in teaching pronunciation. The question relating to pedagogical model raised earlier in chapter 3, is pertinent at this point: Which pronunciation model should the teachers adopt for ESL teaching and learning?

In the first place, the tacit assumption of a "native-like" pronunciation as the ultimate objective is no longer seen as appropriate in all circumstances. This point was raised earlier by Valdman in section 3.3.2. Stern (1992) argues that in deciding a pronunciation target, it is now customary to take into account the role of the foreign speaker vis-a-vis native interlocutors. He further maintains that an important consideration is that the learner's pronunciation should be intelligible to the native speaker and that the foreign user should be able to understand what the native speaker is saying. He further stresses that it is usually not necessary for the learner to acquire a native-like pronunciation.

Furthermore, Stern makes a crucial point that it is often more appropriate for a language learner to signal his or her status as a foreigner by his non-native accent than

to make strenuous efforts to appear indistinguishable from native speakers.

Besides intelligibility, another social criterion that has emerged is the acceptability of pronunciation. In other words, it should avoid having features that are offensive, irritating, or absurd in the opinion of both the native and non-native listeners.

The next question relating to the teaching of pronunciation is: how much importance should be attached to phonology, sound discrimination and pronunciation teaching? As pointed out earlier in this chapter, most methodologists accept the principle that pronunciation has an important place in language teaching relative to other areas covered by the ESL curriculum.

Krashen and Terrell (1983) make a strong point against too much attention to the kind of intensive early pronunciation practice that has been favoured by some teachers in the past. They do not seem to be convinced that sustained early pronunciation practice has much effect on ultimate pronunciation.

Another argument for downplaying pronunciation training in language instruction has been advanced by Leather (in Stern, 1992: 113). In his view, too much insistence on correct pronunciation may interfere with the learning of grammar or vocabulary. Leather recommends that pronunciation learning should be considered in the context of the whole ESL programme.

It was highlighted earlier in this chapter that many ESL teachers have become disillusioned with pronunciation training. Lanham (1978: 154) reaffirms this view when he argues that "nowhere is the lack of direction and purpose more in evidence than in the teaching of pronunciation". He maintains that the approach in teaching pronunciation is often fragmentary, the lesson presenting a disarray of bits of information drawn from the pronunciation system. As a result of this "lack of direction and purpose", teachers become disillusioned with pronunciation teaching. The following quotation reflects and summarises this disillusionment (Gilbert, 1984: 1, in Stern, 1992: 114): "The fact is, minimal pair practice alone sometimes seems to yield minimal

results. This may be part of the reason the teaching of pronunciation has fallen into disfavour in so many programmes. Lack of success is discouraging to teachers, and students sometimes feel that pronunciation is an endless succession of unrelated and unmanageable pieces. If the work is so discouraging, shouldn't we just drop it?"

Irrespective of these pessimistic comments, the demand for high levels of pronunciation accuracy is crucial and it does not have to be the same in all types of courses. But regardless of pedagogic context, Stern (1992: 114) gives three universal considerations why pronunciation is important even though it may be difficult to teach and learn. He describes these considerations as:

- \* linguistic
- \* communicative
- \* affective

Furthermore, Stern stresses that the importance of pronunciation teaching does not lie in "sounding like a native speaker," rather, it lies in mastering the grammatical distinctions and the different meanings that are signalled by the phonetic features.

In the South African context, the model of ESL pronunciation teaching has always been RP. The majority of "educated" black ESL speakers have an intelligible accent. It is intelligible firstly to their own English speaking communities and then to the English speaking international communities i.e. standard English but not with RP accent as Quirk (1993) has indicated earlier. It appears that the rhythmic disruptions and incorrect stress are growing phenomena. The following words have been heard incorrectly stressed on the SABC (Titlestad, 1996b: 52 - notes):

<b>Incorrect</b>	<b>Correct</b>
appropriate	ap'propriate
category	cat'egory
interested	in'terested
development	de'velopment
monopolise	mon'opolise



- (1) errors that impair communication significantly
- (2) errors that have highly stigmatising effects on the listener or reader
- (3) errors that occur frequently in students' speech and writing.

#### 4.7 CONCLUSIONS

It was stressed in this chapter that all the described grammatical and phonological deviations from standard English do not signal the beginning of a new English.

We have also pointed out that the ESL learners interlanguage is permeable. This means that a learner progresses further along the learning continuum so that his or her interlanguage moves closer and closer to the target language system and contains fewer and fewer errors. However, it was stated that some errors will probably never disappear entirely. Obvious examples are the pronunciation errors which form part of the ESL learners accent retained by most adolescent and adult learners.

Five fundamental questions arise with regard to the learners' errors in the classroom situation (Hendrickson, 1980: 156).

- \* Should learners errors be corrected?
- \* If so, when should learners errors be corrected?
- \* Which learner errors should be corrected?
- \* How should learner errors be corrected?
- \* Who should correct learner errors?

What seems to complicate the whole debate is the fact that the literature on error correction in ESL teaching reveals the following unresolved concerns:

- \* no current standards exist on whether, when, which or how student errors should be corrected or who should correct them;
- \* there are few widely accepted linguistic criteria of grammatical and lexical

corrections in foreign language teaching;

- \* much of what has been published on error correction is speculative, and needs to be validated by a great deal of empirical experimentation.

Despite all these constraints, Hendrickson admits that a sufficient body of literature on error correction exists to merit a systematic review.

Corder (1974) advises that our ingenuity should be concentrated on techniques for dealing with errors after they have occurred.

Furthermore we need to clarify the following assumptions held by sociolinguists:

- \* the first maintains that if we were to achieve a perfect teaching method the errors would never be committed in the first place, and that the occurrence of those errors is exclusively the sign of the present inadequacy of the teaching techniques;
- \* that we live in an imperfect world and consequently errors will always occur in spite of the teachers best efforts.
- \* The assumption that errors do not impede "communication" and should not be corrected;
- \* The nature of "creativity" and of a "new English".

ESL learners make errors in their interlanguage system. We have pointed out earlier that such systems are usually unstable in given individuals, since there is invariably continuing improvement in learning the target language. In other words, the learner's system is continually being modified as new elements are incorporated throughout the learning process. Such developing systems are evident in learner's errors.



As far as "accent", "pronunciation" and the concept of "standard English" are concerned, it has been discussed earlier in this study that accent or pronunciation is irrelevant to the concept of "standard English" which comprises the popular notions of "grammar" and "vocabulary". Furthermore, Wright (1996:158) argues that "accent as popularly taken, has no adverse influence on effective communication only insofar as it does not disable the underlying system of English pronunciation, which is a major meaning-bearing element in the linguistic system."

Gimson (1980) maintains that when it is a question of teaching English as a second language, there is clearly much greater adherence to one of the two main models. Most teaching textbooks describe either RP or American pronunciation and allegiances to one or the other and tend to be traditional or geographical: thus, for instance, European countries, some Asian and the Anglo-phone Africa (including South Africa) continue on the whole to use an accent derived from RP. One can safely conclude that this is one of the "popular" international models at the moment, especially for educational purposes.

Finally, teachers need to be keenly aware of how they correct student errors and to avoid using correction strategies that might embarrass or frustrate students. Several scholars recommend that teachers record their students' errors on diagnostic charts in order to reveal the linguistic features that are causing students' learning problems. This issue will be developed further in chapter 6.

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