

CHAPTER 3

STANDARD ENGLISH AND SOUTH-AFRICAN BLACK ENGLISH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the two key concepts of "standard English" and "South African black English". The label "standard English" could at times be misleading as shown earlier in this thesis because of certain presuppositions it carries for many people.

Strevens (1985: 6) gives two of these false presuppositions:

- (a) that standard English is the English of the numerical majority of English-users;
- (b) that it has some special quality of excellence because, it is believed either it is used by the majority, or it has some official sanction, rather as Standard French has the imprimatur of Académie Française.

Strevens attempts to clarify this issue. He argues that standard English is used by "a minority of the world's 700 million English-users" and that "it is certainly not standard by statistical pre-eminence." Furthermore he argues that there is no authoritative organisation "which pontificates upon usage of English and establishes what should and should not be included within standard English and what should be excluded." In his definition of Standard English, Strevens maintains that "it has no local base." He further makes an important point that "Standard English is accepted throughout the English-using world"... and that "it is spoken with any accent." (Strevens, 1985:6).

Strevens further challenges the notion of a central authority for the English language. He argues that usage in standard English is established by common consent and acceptance or rejection among the educated users of the language, rather than through an imposed official authority.

There are many other myths and misconceptions held by several people regarding standard English. Quirk in his London Times article (1993) takes up this debate around the myths held by many people about the concept of standard English. He clarifies these misconceptions people have about Standard English. He maintains that standard English has nothing to do with puristic extremes, nor with such social attitudes. He further points out that there is a range of registers within standard English. The concept of "standard English" is often confused with "accent". There is a myth for example, that Standard English entails a particular accent, in other words "talking posh" (Quirk, The London Times 1993). According to Quirk's letter to Professor Chris Jeffrey (1994), standard English is conceived to be a widely inclusive concept, at least partly in order to counter egalitarians who attack it as socially exclusive.

According to Quirk's letter, standard English comprises "the vast word-stock (vocabulary) that is registered and defined in dictionaries, together with similarly agreed conventions of spelling and grammar." Quirk maintains that this "form of English is general in the spoken and printed media as well as having - with minor differences - world-wide currency." He argues that being "fully competent in standard English is of prime importance not only for professional development and geographical mobility, but for sharing in all aspects of general life."

Furthermore, he maintains that standard English varies (especially in writing vocabulary and speech) according to subject matter and the level of formality appropriate. While most speech and writing are neutral in formality, spoken standard English is frequently informal as compared with writing (with words like grumpy, put up with, nice). In his reply to Quirk's letter noted earlier, Jeffrey (1994) differs from Quirk regarding the point that standard English should be conceived as neutral. Jeffrey argues that there is some fudging in Quirk's Times statement that the vast majority of standard English words and sentences are of course neither formal nor informal but "neutral" between these extremes. He further argues that in professional terms it takes rather a lot of fudging to count everything from formal written to informal spoken as standard English "tout court". Jeffrey submits that it is best to define standard English as a more or less category rather than an either/or (yes/no, +/-) one. He finally makes the point that as

a term of art "neutral" is not very meaningful or informative. However, Quirk and Jeffrey agree on broader issues pertaining to what is, and is not, standard English.

Quirk makes a crucial point when he says that clear diction is very important but standard English can be spoken in a wide range of pronunciation representing different regional accents (e.g. Nelson Mandela, John Major, Paul Keating and Clinton all speak standard English). Chapter 4 deals with accent in more detail.

Quirk (1994 - Guardian) argues that standard English is classless. He maintains that the debate is not primarily about grammar, since the standard English dialect shares its grammar with most other English dialects, and it is certainly not about accent. Rather in his view, it is about clear diction and about ensuring that children acquire the vocabulary to cover the 30,000 or 40,000 meanings they will need in school subjects.

He expresses his concern about what he calls "tolerant pluralism", i.e. the variety of language that students bring to their classrooms from different social and regional backgrounds or the leaving of ESL errors uncorrected. The Kingman Report (Quirk 1995:26) views this as a trap to keep the pupils in that "present social and ethnic sectors" which creates "a barrier to their educational progress, their career prospects, their social and geographical mobility."

There is however consensus among linguists such as Jeffrey (1994), Corson (1994), Strevens (1977) and Quirk regarding what a standard variety is supposed to be. They maintain that a genuine standard variety of a language provides a more effective means of communication than non-standard varieties especially because standard English is basically the shared vocabulary of the English-speaking countries world wide. For example, earlier in this study we highlighted a number of language functions fulfilled by standard English. Standard English is used to fulfil the following functions in English speaking countries, especially in South Africa.

- * for science and technology
- * for law and legislation

- * for government, parliament and civil service
- * for business and commerce
- * for international communication
- * as a lingua franca
- * for secondary and tertiary education
- * for access to books in libraries.

Lastly, Strevens and Quirk, exclude accent in their definition of standard English. This issue is discussed and explored further in Section 3.1.2.

3.1.1 Standardisation - A historical overview

In England toward the end of the fourteenth century emerged a written language that in the course of the fifteenth won general recognition and has since become the recognised standard especially in writing. The East Midland district contributed most to the formation of this standard.

In the first place Baugh and Cable (1978:192) state that "as a Midland dialect of English, it occupied a middle position between the extreme divergences of the north and south." Secondly, they maintain that this district was the largest and most populous of the major dialect areas. The presence of Oxford and Cambridge Universities in this region according to Baugh and Cable, contributed towards the formation of standard English. The most influential factor in the rise of standard English was the importance of London as the capital of England.

They claim that toward the end of the fifteenth century, the London standard had been accepted, at least in writing in most part of England. Considerable difference in pronunciation still existed. Baugh and Cable (1978:195) argue that "it would be a mistake to think that complete uniformity was attained within the space of a few generations." In their example, they argue that "vocabulary dialectal differences (grammar and accent) have persisted in cultivated speech down to the present day, and they were no less noticeable in the period during which London English was gaining

general acceptance."

In the eighteenth century the language debate took a different turn. It was often expressed as shown by Baugh and Cable (1978:255) that English had been and was being daily corrupted, that it needed correction and refinement and finally the desire of the reformers was that "when the necessary reforms had been effected, it should be fixed permanently and protected from change."

"The lack of a standard to which all might conform was believed to have resulted in many corruptions which were growing up unchecked" (Baugh and Cable, 1978:256). While acknowledging the results obtained by these grammarians and reformers, it is important to note the serious limitations in nearly all of them. Baugh and Cable point out that in their attitudes toward these matters, such people reveal a refusal to accept two cardinal characteristics of historical languages: their essential arbitrariness and their essential susceptibility to change. Strictly speaking, to be a purist in linguistic matters is to suffer from insufficiency of knowledge about language. We have seen earlier in this study that Standard English has nothing to do with puristic extremes, nor with such social attitudes.

Baugh and Cable (1978) argue that one of the reformers' major weaknesses was their failure to recognise the importance of usage as the sole arbiter in linguistic matters.

Secondly, Baugh and Cable argue that these grammarians and reformers did not realise, or refused to acknowledge, that changes in language often appear to be capricious and unreasonable - in other words, these changes are the result of forces too complex to be fully analyzed or predicted.

In 1795 England seized the Dutch settlement in Cape Town. As we have seen in Chapter 2, from this small beginning sprang British rule over large parts of South Africa. The British people (as shown in chapter 2) who came to settle in South Africa in 1806 and 1820, brought with them different dialects of British English. These dialects disappeared over the years. By the turn of the nineteenth century, English

speakers formed a powerful elite in the developing urban economies and English had become a major language in South Africa. The Standard British English of that time became the model dialect which was taught in schools as there was nothing else to teach. African education actually started after the arrival of the English. It was pointed out in chapter two that English as a second language in South Africa has its foundation in the history of English in this country dating from Lord Somerset's proclamation of 1822 which made English the only official language. Furthermore, it was noted that this anglicization policy for both the Dutch and the black people was strengthened by Somerset's schoolmasters and clergymen imported from England and Scotland. They filled influential positions in Dutch and black communities. The earlier period from 1652 when the Dutch arrived in South Africa, was marked by wars between the Xhosa and the Dutch. The economic and social historian de Kiewiet (Rose & Tunmer, 1975: 202) has said that the first colonists in the Cape (Dutch), met some Xhosa tribesmen as early as 1702 and their main preoccupation throughout the eighteenth century was to control boundaries.

In 1855, the state under the control of Governor Grey, supported African education for the first time. He claimed that education, especially industrial training, for blacks would make white people aware of the need to consider Christian responsibility to others less fortunate than the white man. The Governor argued (Rose & Tunmer, 1975: 205) that "the means by which he proposed to attempt the introduction of industrial training were the encouragement of missions connected with industrial schools in which the natives were to be trained in Christian doctrines and at the same time instructed in English." This was the beginning of ESL in South Africa. These mission schools offered a relative excellence in education. This was the first time that education was offered on an official, organised basis. Lanham and McDonald are quoted elsewhere on its relatively high standard - white parents wanted their children to attend mission schools.

3.1.2 Current debate on Standard English

Writing is itself a powerful force driving the standardisation process. This is true because the need for a single standard written variety is greater than that for a single

spoken variety. Nevertheless RP has been a powerful influence on English world-wide in the British sphere. The written variety is acquired through schooling, a standard literacy variety, which students acquire more or less from the beginning of their studies. Usually, writers exercise more control over their writing than speakers can exert over their speech. Cooper (1989) reaffirms Quirk and Strevens' views expressed earlier that there is essentially one standard written English throughout the Anglophone world, with a few minor differences in spelling and vocabulary, whereas there are numerous regional and national spoken English standards. However, the RP sound system is also non-regional (Strevens, 1977/1988). Most teaching textbooks describe either RP or American pronunciation, and allegiances to one or the other tend to be traditional or geographical: thus, for instance, European Countries continue on the whole to teach RP, whereas much of Asia and South America follow the American model.

Cooper further argues that since we tend to glorify the written varieties and since written varieties are likely to be more standardised than the spoken varieties, we tend to accept the written standard as a universal model. Quirk (1993) stresses a slightly different point from Cooper when he argues that standard English is general in the spoken and printed media as well as having minor differences, with world-wide currency. At the moment, accent is not considered as part of the standard language package.

Rubin (Cooper, 1989) views standardisation as a relative term. In her discussion of language standardisation, she argues that all human interaction requires some degree of standardisation; i.e. some degree of shared expectations and shared understanding. If each participant in an interaction operates according to different norms, communication breaks down (c.f. Quirk's concerns in Chapter 5).

Furthermore, we have seen that standard English is a mode of expression that we seek when we wish to communicate beyond our immediate community with members of a wider community of the nation as a whole, or with members of the still wider community, English-speakers as a whole. Quirk (1985, 1990) echoes the above views that as an ideal, standard English cannot be perfectly realised and we must expect that

members of different wider communities (Britain, America, Nigeria, India, for example) may produce different realisations. He goes further to point out that in fact, the remarkable thing is the very high degree of unanimity, the small amount of divergence. He concludes by saying that any English speaker can read a newspaper printed in Leeds, San Francisco or Delhi without difficulty and often even without realising that there are differences at all. This last view reinforces that notion that the written standard is more universal than the spoken mode (c.f. Quirk's Concerns, Chapter 5). Gabriele Stein at the 1995 English Academy Conference as indicated earlier in this thesis, highlighted that one of the major newspapers, The Sowetan, uses standard English.

Peter Strevens (1977:136) challenges the notion of a standard language above a rigid line, anything below this line being considered "substandard" (Platt et al, 1984). He argues that "standard" English does not mean "better", it means simply "most frequent". He goes further to indicate that a dialect that is not Standard English ought to be referred to as "non-standard", rather than "sub-standard".

Strevens gives a detailed description of Standard English, excluding accent as a universal non-regional dialect. He maintains that this dialect has no affinity either with a particular region or with a particular accent. He argues that this dialect has the following six important positive features:

- (1) It is used by educated people who make use of English all over the world, not solely in Britain.
- (2) Wherever it is used, it displays very little geographical or social variation (although there are distinctive features of British and American English, for example).
- (3) It may be spoken with an accent from any geographical locality, or with a non-regional accent i.e. RP.

- (4) It has been universally accepted in the English speaking world as the only appropriate model for educational use.
- (5) It is the variety of English most comprehensively desirable and studied.
- (6) It is the dialect of literary writing, with exceptions only for works that deliberately introduce and emphasise local features of language.

It was noted earlier that the concept of "standard English" is often confused with accent and that there is a myth for example, that standard English entails a particular accent, in other words "talking posh" (Quirk, 1993). Standard English is therefore, not an accent but it involves grammatical and lexical forms as well as a phonological structure. Strevens claims that the characteristics of standard English are displayed when it is written down, and also in a transcript of speech; but when a person speaks English using standard English dialect, he or she is bound to use one accent or another, and may be either a non-regional or regional accent. Speech operates as a means of holding a community together and to give a sense of belonging. It is therefore, easy to identify or recognise someone who speaks with an accent of a different community.

Rajend Mesthrie (1991 point 11, no pages) argues that "while empowerment of people speaking non-standard dialects via teaching the use of the standard is a feasible goal, it must be tempered by questions of allegiance. That is such empowerment is not a practical proposition unless the pupil wants to be associated with the group that typically speaks standard English ..." Mesthrie's comment raises a key question: Is there a South African non-standard English that exists in textbooks? Most of the time the ESL pupils would be taught standard English in any case.

Mesthrie's view that pupils should not be taught standard English unless they want to be associated with the group that typically speaks standard English, is indeed untenable because pupils may not be aware of the value of standard English at the time when they are given an option to either learn it or not. Contrary to Mesthrie's view, the Kingman Report (Quirk, 1995: 26) as noted earlier, even though it has British origins and

application, sees such an "educational ethos as trapping students in their present social and ethnic sectors and as creating a barrier to their educational progress, their career prospects, their social and geographical mobility."

ESL students learn English mainly for "integrative" and "instrumental" reasons. Teachers should consider these reasons in the classroom situation. Gardner and Lambert (1959) were the first to make the distinction between "integrative" and "instrumental" motivation in second language acquisition. "Integrative" motivation refers to the desire to achieve proficiency in a new language in order to participate in the life of the community that speaks the language. Gardner and Lambert argue that it reflects a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group. "Instrumental" motivation on the other hand, may be defined as the desire to achieve proficiency in the target language for utilitarian reasons, such as getting a job or having access to the resources offered by standard English, books in libraries and tertiary education.

It is indicated above that it is very difficult for children to make these choices. Instrumental and integrative motivation is only applicable to adult second language learners. It is therefore important that all the pupils be exposed to the standard English variety and later on if they choose to reject it, it will be solely their own decision.

At this point it may be useful to recapitulate by giving in full the interesting definition of Standard English as it appears in the most recent unabridged Webster dictionary with four subsections (Quirk & Stein, 1990: 121):

- (1) The English taught in schools.
- (2) English that is current, reputable and national.
- (3) The English that with respect to spelling, grammar, and vocabulary is substantially uniform though not devoid of regional differences, that is well-established by usage in the formal and informal (speech) and writing of the

educated and that is widely recognised as acceptable wherever English is (spoken) and understood.

- (4) All words entered in a general English language dictionary that are not restricted by a label (as slang, dialect, etc.)

It has been highlighted earlier in this study that "accent" is excluded from the Standard English package.

Finally, Quirk's (1990/1995) position on the question of the advantages of standard English as noted earlier, is that "all the students know perfectly well that their command of standard English is likely to increase their freedom and their career prospects." He concludes that "teachers and learners should accept the basic conclusion that it is the institution's duty to teach standard English."

3.2 SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ENGLISH

3.2.1 Introduction

"Research examining the English of black South Africans is still in its infancy" (Gough, 1996:53). The question of South African black English is a controversial one. For example, some educators have wondered if black English really exists at all. The concept "black English" in South Africa has not yet been thoroughly explored, investigated and documented. To simply concede that there is a black English variety still leaves several areas of controversy.

For example:

- * What does black English mean?
- * How do teachers cope with this variety of English in the ESL classroom?

"Black English" means various things in different contexts. For example, in America,

"black English" refers to the native language (i.e. a mother tongue English) spoken by African Americans, while in South Africa the same concept could mean "varieties" of English which are acquired at school as a second or third language (c.f. Section 2.4 for an elaborate debate on the subject of black English). Some linguists in South Africa, refer to it as "South African Black English (SABE), whereas others call it "Black South African English" (BSAE). We have seen that the American variety of black English is regarded as a non-standard form of English in America although there is a lobby for acceptance of these forms (c.f. Sledd etc).

If one re-examines the concept of black English closely in South Africa, one is tempted to pose the questions: does "black English" cover all the blacks who come from diverse linguistic background? To what extent for example, does "Nguni English" differ from "Sotho English"? How far removed is the English of the blacks who live in extreme rural areas? Are there dialectal differences between Soweto and the townships surrounding Cape Town or in the Eastern province or in rural Natal? It is worth asking the question whether there are common features. Gough (1996: 61-67) gives random phonological and grammatical features of what he calls black South African English. He does not seem to address the most important questions raised elsewhere in this thesis:

- * Where on the cline does one make the choice of black English?
- * What does the teacher teach?
- * What goes into grammar and textbooks?
- * Will some people who have had better education be inclined to correct the non-standard forms or at least avoid them?

Gough does not discuss the general question of language functions illustrated throughout this study. Furthermore, he fails to distinguish the different language competence levels on the cline, i.e., acrolect, mesolect and basilect levels. It is not clear what the role of

the ESL teacher is supposed to be. For example, at which point on the cline should the teacher start correcting the errors and when does he or she stop correcting these errors?

In addition, Buthelezi's (1995: 245) understanding of SABE is quite interesting. Unlike Gough, she approaches the debate from a different perspective. She starts by making a distinction between "interlanguage errors" which are still open to modification (e.g. features of number and subject-verb agreement) and those which have fossilised to the extent that they can now be classified as distinctive features of South African black English. Buthelezi identifies two types of errors on the interlanguage cline of which one, surprisingly becomes black English:

- * those errors which are at the lower end of the cline which should and can be corrected
- * those fossilised errors at any point of the cline (cf. Table 3); i.e. at the basilect, mesolect or acrolectal levels. This situation seems to have been created by poor ESL teaching and learning strategies. We therefore cannot simply call the outcome of this process SABE.

SABE according to Buthelezi as noted earlier, consists of fossilised features. The crucial point in this case is that she seems to focus on the symptoms of the ESL teaching and learning situation, rather than addressing the causes of the "problem". It appears that the main cause of these features is the now scrapped Bantu Education system and the Verwoerdian philosophy of providing inferior education for blacks. There are different pockets of black people who use fossilised features of English, it obviously does not include every black English speaker. In fact, the higher one moves on the cline, the more one gets rid of the fossilised forms. This issue will be explained further in Section 3.3.1 and in Chapters 6 and 9.

The question of labels (Nguni English, Sotho English, etc) of different varieties of English as shown earlier in this thesis, can be confusing at times, especially because the grammar, lexis and the vocabulary of all the above mentioned "Englishes" are almost similar. The only feature which slightly characterises them is accent which in anyway

is excluded from the standard English package. It is important to note that Gough does not make this key distinction. At times it becomes difficult to differentiate these varieties on the basis of pronunciation because they are more similar than different. One wonders if it is necessary to use these labels or to further segment this concept of "black English" into these ethnic units. The main focus in this study will be on a broader designation, that is "black English" in as far as this exists.

In order to understand this concept of South African black English variety we need to explore it broadly. Wright (1996: 153) interrogates the hypothesis postulated by de Kadt (1993:314) regarding the definition of Black South African English. He maintains that black South African English (BSAFE) "could be defined as an arrested stage in a learner-language continuum". He further indicates that "this definition implies acquiescence in an incomplete educational process, an attitude scarcely palatable to proponents of BSAFE, let alone the masses who are demanding quality education" and an educational system that is in the process of being transformed after the degradation of Verwoerdian under financing.

Wright argues that "if BSAFE is actually composed of a number of ethnic varieties of English, then its role as a national medium of communication must be called in question." He then makes a crucial point that an "educated" variety of BSAFE must be "highly responsive to the norms of international standard English." Both as lingua franca and because of the need for the international variety.

These ethnic varieties of English highlighted earlier in this section, are highly contentious. They are also not well documented and researched. Quirk (1995) supports Wrights' concern about the notion of non-native varieties of English. He argues that they are inherently unstable, ranged along a qualitative cline, with each speaker seeking to move to a point where the varietal characteristics reach vanishing point.

Quirk further singles out a variety which is quite often confusing when used to describe a variety of English. This is "black English": he wonders if it covers all the blacks in North America. In addition, he argues that any linguistic basis becomes rather broad and if it is extended to include the English of blacks in Britain even though blacks in

Britain very often speak with a British accent, a linguistic basis becomes incredible, especially since the term "black" is assumed not only by Britons of Afro-Caribbean origin but equally by many who are of Pakistani and Indian origin as well.

This same concept in our context is labelled "South African Black English" (SABE). At this point we need to look beyond the mere labels attached to the English language. Quirk (1995: 28) quotes a colleague in Kenya who has recently told him in a letter: "There is a heated debate here (in Kenya) as to whether there is such a thing as "East African English" or whether the local variety is just the result of the increasing failure of the education system". Quirk's colleague makes an important observation which seems to be relevant to our South African language situation. He wonders whether "East African English" has not emerged "as a result of the increasing failure of the education system".

We have indicated earlier in this study that the financing system of black education has had a devastating effect upon the per capita expenditure. It has been pointed out elsewhere in this thesis that in 1953 while a black child received R17 both the coloured and Indian children received R40 each. White children on the other hand received R128. It was also highlighted that in 1994 black pupils received R2184. In Indian schools, pupils received R4600, in Coloured schools each pupil received R3700. Children attending "white" schools received R5400 (Sunday Times - 27 August 1995).

This funding situation is being redressed at the moment. It will take some time for this funding to be evenly distributed to all the pupils. As a result of these years of underfunding, the standard of English teaching and performance in black schools seems to have deteriorated.

3.2.2 What is South African black English?

Chapter one (Section 1.2), presented Ndebele's argument that South African English must be open to the possibility of its becoming a new language. Buthelezi (1989) takes this debate further when she argues that a vicious cycle is perpetuated whereby learners acquire features of South African black English directly from the ESL teachers and then

reproduce these innocently. In other words, she implies that most features of the learners fossilised English are actually teacher influenced. Buthelezi's recent article (1995: 245), reinforces her 1989 position when she makes a distinction (noted earlier in this thesis) between "interlanguage errors which are still open to modification and those which have fossilised to the extent that they can now be classified as distinctive features of SABE".

It was noted in Section 3.2.1 that Buthelezi seems to focus more on the "errors" rather than the cause of these "errors". It is evident from Buthelezi's views that the so called "South African black English" appears to have emerged as a result of poor ESL teacher training. Both Ndebele's and Buthelezi's points of view regarding SABE, cogent as they may be, generate a number of intractable questions:

- * Where does SABE begin on the cline?
- * At which point does the teacher correct "errors"?
- * If it is admitted that language errors constitute SABE, at which point does this happen?
- * Do all black ESL learners make same "errors" which can be codified and should all these errors be admitted in BSAE?
- * In what way do we rewrite our grammars and school text-books?

We need well thought out answers to these questions before we make conclusions that there is black English in South Africa. Several factors have limited the quality and potential growth of ESL in South Africa. As a result of the now scrapped Bantu Education, Separate Development Act and Group Areas Act, different races were forced by law to live in their own residential areas, with separate amenities, schools and churches. Due to these policies, contact between blacks and English mother tongue speakers has been minimised, especially in the formative years, including the middle teens. The mission tradition (c.f. Royal Reader English, chapter 2) has virtually

disappeared and white English teachers are rarely found in black schools. They are found in smaller numbers than formerly at the black tertiary institutions. Very few black students in the past had the opportunity to be accepted at English universities where they would have come into contact with English mother tongue students and lecturers and this obviously could improve their proficiency in English. This is now happening again though in a limited way e.g. the Model C schools, and the private schools. According to Schlebush (1994:98 in Gough, 1996: 55) "this appears to have led to at least partial language shift with a perceived decrease in competence in the mother tongue, as she finds in the Model C schools she investigated".

In black schools, teachers are the primary agents for provision and propagation of English (Buthelezi, 1989). The vast majority of black teachers, given the Bantu Education historical background, have themselves acquired English from other black teachers. The learners receive a type of English which is already modified, slightly deviant from "white" standard English. Buthelezi (1989) earlier made the point that "a vicious cycle is perpetuated whereby learners acquire features of SABE directly from their teachers and then reproduce them innocently". As noted earlier, Buthelezi still endorses this attitude. At the same time by calling it "a vicious cycle" Buthelezi is condemning the process. The whole debate becomes compounded when she condones the fossilised forms by labelling them SABE. These ESL teachers' inadequate level or competency of English unfortunately serves as a model for their learners. Lanham (1996) reaffirms this concern when he argues that for teachers and pupils who for several generations now have been deprived of an adequate English language education, the English medium for learning mathematics, science, geography etc. makes such learning a language problem far more than a conceptual learning problem. Lanham further makes an interesting observation when he alerts us to the fact that "as yet, there is no indication that those creating new syllabuses, policy statements etc. have fully grasped this". He warns that reports and research are accumulating which must be heeded if the great opportunities offered in starting afresh in South African education are not to be dissipated.

The type of English spoken and written by black people according to Schmied (1991) depends largely on the following two factors:

- * their education, i.e. the length and degree of formal education in English;
- * their occupation, i.e. the necessity for and amount of English used in everyday life (c.f. table 3).

In the South African context, Branford (1996) concurs with Schmied that the social functions of English for blacks depend often on the English that they have been able to learn at school. Schmied (1991:48) provides a table (c.f. table 3), which gives a clearer picture of the different stages of ESL acquisition.

Cline of English varieties	Cummulative length of English education	Degree of formal education		Characteristic jobs and occupations	
		ESL	EIL	ESL	EIL
Acrolect	14 years	University in home country	University in English speaking country	Newspaper editors, lawyers, senior officers in Civil Service and business firms	University lecturers, medical doctors, business managers.
Mesolect	8-14 years	Secondary School	University in home country	Junior civil servants, senior nurses, secretaries, typists	Senior civil servants, newspaper editors, lawyers
Basilect	7-10 years	Primary school	Secondary school	Shop assistants, taxi drivers, clerks, nurses	Medical assistants, junior civil servants, typists, secretaries

ESL = English as a second language

EIL = English as an international language

TABLE 3: SCHMIED'S CONTINUUM OF ENGLISH VARIETIES IN AFRICAN SOCIOLINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT

This table shows the different proficiency levels of ESL users. Schmied conceptualises variation in language in terms of a scalogram of lects: basilect, mesolect and acrolect. This scalogram ranges from the more basic level called "basilect" to the highest level called "acrolect". At the basic stage, the learner still relies more on mother tongue communicative strategies.

Schmied's second level is called the "mesolect" stage. At this level, learners have at least 8 to 14 years of formal English education. This group of ESL users is obviously more proficient than the first at the basilect level. His final advanced phase is called the "acrolect" level of proficiency. These are proficient users of "educated" variety of English at this category.

Kachru uses the concept of the cline, embodying similar concepts to Schmied. In his earlier article in 1965, Kachru calls his phases of proficiency on the cline:

- * Zero point
- * Central point and
- * Ambilingual point.

Kachru's continuum also has the basic level at which the learner still relies heavily on the teacher and his mother tongue. This is similar to Schmied's basilect phase. The "central point" is equivalent to the "mesolect" level and finally, the "ambilingual" stage is assumed to be an apex of the cline. This phase is similar to Schmied's acrolect level of proficiency. As the learners approach the apex, the divergencies which still exist seem to become so small as to be noticed only by pronunciation.

If we examine Schmied's continuum, we find that it is more detailed than the earlier efforts by Kachru. He has attempted to categorise different learners according to their cumulative length of English education, the degree of personal education and their occupations.

Even though Schmied has provided all this detail, his model still falls short of the central questions. For example:

- * Where do we draw a line between errors which have to be corrected, and so-called black English which can be codified?
- * At what stage does black English become an "educated" variety of English?
- * How different is the black educated variety from the international educated varieties?
- * At which point or level can black English be used as a local variety in education?

This section seeks to address all the issues raised above. We have seen earlier in this study that ESL in South Africa is basically acquired through the media (specially in urban areas) and the education system.

At the earliest stages of ESL acquisition, learners tend to make many errors e.g. overgeneralisation:

(i) Plural form:

- (a) Child > *childs/childrens
- (b) woman > *womans

(ii) Tenses (simple past)

- (c) bring > *brang
- (d) drink > *drinked

(iii) Subject/verb agreement

- (e) I go home
- (f) *He go home

(iv) Confused gender pronouns

- (g) *My brother she go home
- (h) *My father her name is John.

The last set of examples ((g) and (h)) reveal a number of difficulties encountered by the ESL learner. Firstly, the learner retains the pronouns after using subjects, e.g. "my brother" and "my father". Secondly, the pronouns do not correlate with the subjects.

Thirdly, subject/verb agreement rule is flouted, e.g. *"brother (she) go".

In order to understand the root or the basis of some of the errors, we have to look at the learner's first language. For example:

- (g) *"My brother she go home." This sentence seems to be a direct translation from 'Umfowethu uya ekhaya' (isiZulu).

If we analyse the isiZulu sentence above, we find that it reveals a number of underlying issues. It makes use of concords, e.g. "u" which refers either to a male or female. The same concord can be used to refer to the second or third person, depending on the level of the tone, if it is high, it refers to the third person, but if it is low, it refers to the second person.

Another observation from the above isiZulu example is that it does not use subject/verb agreement. It again makes use of concords which must agree with their respective noun class systems. For example,

(singular) "umfowethu uya" > my brother goes ...

(plural) "abafowethu baya" > my brothers go ...

The prefix "um-" belongs to noun class 1 (singular prefix) and "aba-" to class 2 (plural prefix).

In English, in order to change a noun in a singular form to a plural form, the noun becomes suffixed; e.g.

brother (singular)

brothers (plural)

These "errors" described in (i) - (iv) above, are part of the ESL learner's "interlanguage". They are of course common at the basilect level. These "errors" should be corrected by the education system. In other words, ESL learners acquire standard English in schools. Some people however, might argue that these first utterances and writing in the target language could be regarded as the beginning of the

"black English" debate. Hopefully, if all the pupils from all the racial background attended the same schools and both black and white teachers taught all these pupils across the colour bar, there would perhaps be no need for labelling this variety of English as "black". The appropriate term would be "educated South African standard English" (c.f. later in this section for further discussion). The notion of "errors" noted earlier in this section, is sometimes contentious or controversial.

Kachru (1991) explores this concept of "errors" when he focuses on "mistakes" and "deviations" in non-native Englishes. He poses a central question: how much deviation from the norm is acceptable pedagogically, linguistically and above all with reference to intelligibility?

He makes a distinction between the terms "mistake" and "deviation" on linguistic and contextual levels. He argues that a "mistake" may be unacceptable to a native speaker since it does not belong to the linguistic "norm" of the English language. On the other hand, a "deviation" has the following characteristics according to Kachru. He argues that deviation is different from the norm in the sense that it is the result of the new "un-English" linguistic and cultural setting in which the English language is consistently used. Kachru calls his own model of English the "liberation" model. He argues that Quirk's position means the rejection of the cline, for Quirk tends to emphasise the acrolect. Kachru is prepared to give rein to the basilect. He argues that the intranational functions far outweigh the international. This debate is extensively discussed later in this study.

The central question is whether Kachru's model does liberate - does it give access to the international standard? Does it even make for a reliable internal medium of communication? Can it be used in schools as a pedagogic model? Are teachers ready to teach and use this variety? In his discussion paper: "The Standard English debate" Titlestad (1995:190) argues that concentration on the basilect as is the case with Kachru, Buthelezi and Ndebele, is concentration on language at its most limiting level of the cline - lexically and in range of interest and subject matter.

Titlestad further attacks Kachru and the proponents of black English when he says that they have not thought through the various language functions needed and disregard the advantages that the acrolect brings, internally and internationally.

Titlestad (1995:190) poses a key question when he asks whether Kachru has really faced the consequences of schools' teaching the basilect. He further indicates that "the concept is utterly limiting." He warns that "the various uses that English has in South Africa would make basilectal English in South African education an unmitigated disaster, were the Kachru model to be adopted here."

Patkowski (1982) provides a more elaborate language proficiency framework than the limited three phases propounded by Kachru and Schmied earlier in this section. He gives five stages (c.f. Table 4) through which a second language learner has to go. According to Patkowski's model, one can surmise that "educated black English" begins almost at the fourth stage up to the fifth - called "full professional proficiency" and "native proficiency" respectively. At these levels, it is assumed that the non-native speaker has excellent control of the grammar, few errors are made and the few errors that occur are still random; vocabulary is also broad, precise and literate.

	0	Unable to function in the L₂
Elementary proficiency	1	Can use stock expressions, almost no control of syntax, speaks largely by juxtaposition of words; vocabulary is adequate only for survival, basic courtesy needs; except for memorised expressions, speech is so fragmentary that little meaning is conveyed.
Limited working proficiency	2	Has fair control of basic patterns, uses single "kernel" sentences; very frequent errors of all types; vocabulary is adequate for simple social conversation and routine job needs; relatively simple meanings are accurately conveyed but linguistic abilities are clearly strained in doing so.

Minimum professional proficiency	3	Has good control of most basic syntactic patterns; reasonably complex sentences used, errors quite frequent, vocabulary is adequate for participation in all general conversation and for professional discussion in a specific field despite errors and possible circumspections; always accurately conveys meanings of relative complexity.
Full professional proficiency	4	Has excellent control of the grammar; the few errors that occur are still random rather than system based; vocabulary is broad, precise, and literate; occasional unidiomatic use of words or expressions; can convey complex messages in fluent and literate fashion.
Native proficiency	5	Has native control of grammar; vocabulary is equal to that of an educated native, speech is as fluent as a native's.

TABLE 4: MODIFIED MARK PATKOWSKI'S LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FRAMEWORK

It is however, important at this stage of the debate, to once more highlight the fact that educated black English refers mainly to grammar, lexis and vocabulary rather than accent. Peter Strevens (c.f. Section 3.1.2) elaborates extensively on this subject. He argues that standard English is used by "educated people" who make use of English all over the world. He also makes the point that it may be spoken with an accent from any geographical locality, or with a non-regional accent.

Another interesting issue which needs to be explored further, is the question of "educated people" raised by Strevens above. If we re-examine Kachru's, Schmied's and Patkowski's language proficiency models, we can draw some parallels and differences. For example, Schmied states that ESL learners at the basilect level, are likely to have 7 to 10 years cumulative length of formal English education. Those at the mesolect stage are likely to be or to have had secondary education and finally, those whose

proficiency is closest to the acrolectal level, it is assumed, should either have had a university education abroad or at their own country. They are also supposed to be holding higher positions in their communities, e.g. doctors, lecturers, business managers and so on. Kachru's emphasis differs from the two other models (Schmied's and Patkowski's). He simply categorises the "outer circle" users of English into three proficiency levels. His point of departure is that the English learners in India, learn Indian English within his cline of bilingualism (i.e. zero point up to ambilingual point). This approach raises a number of questions:

- * at which point do teachers correct the "errors"?
- * What do teachers teach?
- * Are dictionaries and grammar books available in Indian English?
- * What is the attitude of education authorities, the "educated" Indian community and politicians towards this Indian English?
- * Do all the provinces in India use the same variety of Indian English?
- * Where do we draw the line between Indian English and standard English?

On the other hand, Patkowski does not provide the kind of detail given by Schmied. He focuses primarily on the levels of proficiency rather than the years of formal education and the qualifications acquired. Nevertheless, this appears to be a more cogent model than Schmied's. It is certainly more useful than Kachru's cline or his idea of the "systemic" detail.

3.3 EDUCATED BLACK ENGLISH (STANDARD ENGLISH OR GENERAL PURPOSE ENGLISH)

The term "educated" is difficult to define especially with regard to second language acquisition.

According to Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, it means "someone who is educated or who shows high standards of learning". Earlier in this study, it has been indicated that ESL learners acquire it mainly in schools. If this definition is applied to the ESL context, it could at times be misleading that anyone who speaks and writes an educated variety of English should be someone who shows a high standard of educational qualification. For example: Schmied claims that "acrolect" speakers of English should have at least 14 years of English education and should have obtained a degree at a local university or from an English speaking country. Furthermore, he maintains that these speakers should be occupying high positions such as newspaper editors, lawyers, university lecturers, medical doctors and so on. Those categories of intellectuals can rightly be regarded and classified as speakers of an educated variety of English.

However, there are other people who do not hold high academic qualifications and high occupations who are also speakers of this variety. At the basilect level which is equivalent to Kachru's bazaar English, Schmied gives an example of people with seven to ten years of English education. These people are shop assistants, bus drivers, clerks and nurses. This category according to him would not qualify to be users of this "educated" variety. In South Africa, there are taxi drivers, clerks and shop assistants who are even more proficient in this variety of English at the spoken and in certain spheres of activity than many intellectuals. There should be another way of looking at this issue.

There are also proficient users of this variety who only have very basic education. It was stated earlier in this study, that during the mission school period in black education ESL learners used to be proficient in English as from their fourth and fifth year of English formal education. The primary reason for this was that they were motivated to learn Standard English and secondly, their teachers were also highly skilled in English teaching. Today, we still have the remnants of the Royal Reader English users who quite often invoke the spirit of the "good old days". In other words, this group of Royal Reader learners had the opportunity and the privilege of being taught in smaller classes by skilled missionaries.

There are also black pupils who start right from the grades at the English medium schools who could be quite proficient in English as early as standard three or four, which according to Schmied could be regarded as the "basilect".

What we perhaps need to emphasise right here, is that it does not matter how many years of formal education one has undergone, but what is important is how one develops oneself soon after whatever formal education one has acquired. For example, bank tellers after passing matric could be at the "mesolect" level, but within a year or two of their exposure to Standard English users, will increase their level of proficiency to almost acrolect level. When one meets them after two or three years, one finds that they have improved quite remarkably, especially with their accent. But the only problem is that spoken skills may not match writing skills and the two aspects are separate.

On the other hand, there are some speakers of this variety who have integrative motivation to learn Standard English on their own without formal education. Integrative motivation is the motivation as noted earlier of a person who learns the second language for the purpose of interacting and socialising with the target language group. Sociolinguistic studies have shown that this type of ESL learner acquires the target language faster than those who are forced by the school system to do so.

Therefore, if we concede that the educated black English-speaking community encompasses all those speakers who have "native control of grammar and their vocabulary is almost equal to that of an educated native and their speech is as fluent as a native's" (Patkowski, 1982) irrespective of their academic and professional qualifications; then we can conclude that they all belong to the educated family who make use of this English variety all over the world, not solely in Britain or America. The target for teaching should be the codified standard English. We have seen that the existence of educated South African black English is queried and even the existence of a codifiable and teachable black English is seen as doubtful. The variety of English used by educated speakers is called "standard English" or "general purpose English". It is important at this point to stress that the pedagogic notion of "standard English" does not imply a refusal to accept the existence of non-standard (non-native) varieties of English

or of features that are specifically local but of limited occurrence and so do not affect the core. Classroom strategies might be needed, however, to deal with features that are non-standard.

Quirk's article regarding the English language in a global context is pertinent in this debate, especially his concern for those non-native English speaking countries who teach English for local purposes. A good example is Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea. This pidgin's creolised form was institutionalised by the Australian Government for idealistic reasons. Today it is showing considerable "internal instability and is being rejected in favour of an external model of English by those with power and influence" (Quirk, 1988: 237). This situation arises because the world is gradually shrinking into a "global village", people across the cultures as indicated earlier need to communicate for economic, technological, scientific and most importantly, for local and global peace initiatives.

In order to stop the wars around the globe, different nations need to communicate in a common language. The viable language at the moment to accomplish this seems to be English. The educated variety of English has to be intelligible to all the users of English. This variety of English, as indicated above, is part of international Standard English. It is generally observed (c.f. Ahulu, 1992 and Svartvik, 1985) that such phenomena as coinage, lexical borrowing are processes by which English is creating and expanding its lexicon as an international language.

The phases provided earlier by both Schmied and Patkowski are not watertight, they overlap and thus it is not feasible to put down the learners' levels of qualification and fixed years of exposure to formal education as we have already stated. There are many factors which need to be considered before any classification can be determined.

It depends mainly on the type of teachers the learners are exposed to. If these teachers are well equipped to teach English as a second language, then the learners move from one level of proficiency to another without much difficulties. Learners may take a shorter or a longer period depending on their teachers' abilities rather than the time frames stipulated by Schmied earlier in this chapter (c.f. Section 3.2.2).

At this point we must go back to one of the central questions: where do we draw a line between errors which have to be corrected and so-called "black English"? Errors can be detected throughout all the stages of the continuum of the learner's interlanguage. These errors should be seen within the development of a learner's interlanguage. Kachru (1985) refers to ESL "errors" as "allowable deviations".

He further complains that labels such as "errors" and "mistakes", are pejorative. He perceives what is regarded as "errors" by the users of the inner circle (mother tongue speakers of English), as deviations or innovations initiated by the users of English in the outer circle (ESL speakers). Let us assume that the educated Indian variety of English is the model for all the ESL learners in India, the question that one may ask is: "what would Kachru call the deviations of the learners at the lowest level of his continuum of ESL learning?" Are they to be regarded as correctable or as systemic-part of the new? This is one of the key points in the argument of this thesis. These issues will be explored fully later in this chapter (c.f. section 4.1).

Kachru (1985) also gives the following modified cline of competence in English:

- * educated variety (acrolect)
- * semi-educated variety (mesolect)
- * bazaar variety (basilect)

He further argues that within each variety, further distinctions are possible. He maintains that an educated speaker may switch between one or more varieties or mix varieties with other languages.

Again Kachru does not specify the level of education or exposure to educated users of English at various stages of the cline. It is therefore, not realistic to classify what appears to be complex into simple grids or categories.

Coming back to the South African situation, the question which needs to be asked with regard to ESL is: "At which level in the continuum can we say that the "black variety" is ready to be used as an exclusive, ideal pedagogic model?"

When Kachru was faced with the same thought-provoking question in his "South Asian English" article (1983:356), his response was that Indian English maintains varying degrees of Englishness within educated South Asian English which is graded from pidgin English or broken English on the one hand to educated (or standard) South Asian English. He further admits that "some speakers of educated South Asian English even aim at received pronunciation. He further argues elsewhere that basilectal non-native second language varieties of English could serve as the ideal pedagogic language models in education. This applies even to varieties low on the cline, which exist and he claims, work. He takes this issue even further saying that these basilectal non-native varieties call for replacement of "pedagogical models" (British and the American varieties) that have become "suspect". In later articles e.g. *The Quirk Concern* (1990), Kachru puts forward this idea of basilectal education models.

Quirk (1988) challenges Kachru and questions the logic and validity of his argument. Quirk further poses a teasing question: how likely is it that a minister of education in Delhi or Lagos will provide resources for teaching to a model derived from non-native norms, especially any that could be characterised as low on the cline of the continuum? The situation in South Africa is quite unique. The inherited language policy in education "is fraught with tensions, contradictions, sensitivities and underpinned by linguistic and racial discrimination" (1995: 1.1 - *Towards a Language Policy in Education*). However, a major challenge still lies ahead if balanced, creative and productive interpretation of the complex language provisions of the Constitution is to be achieved. The Minister of Education in South Africa, one hopes, would not provide resources for teaching to a model derived from non-standard English. Ahulu (1994: 26) takes this debate further when he provides a pertinent example of the Ghanaian variety of English. He argues that it is not only educationalists and language experts who are sceptical about a Ghanaian variety of English; parents and the general public are continually complaining about the use of non-standard English on Ghanaian campuses, and recommending that stern measures be taken against it.

Furthermore, Quirk surmises that if a national needs analysis in India or Nigeria or Singapore should convince ministers of education and other government officials that resources should be found for the promotion of non-native norms for teaching, low on

the cline of the continuum, then he admits that we might be in a different ball-game. The point Quirk is making here is that education ministers and government officials in these countries (India, Nigeria, Singapore) are aware of the importance of international Standard English. All the countries of the world are economically, technologically and scientifically interdependent. What brings these countries together is some form of the "acrolectal" form of English which is closer to the international Standard English. These ministers and government officials are also aware that by opting for a local variety, they will be isolating themselves from the international arena.

To illustrate this point further, Wright (1993:4) poses the following question: "Let us imagine for a moment that a radically non-standard English were to be accepted as a new standard and institutionalised... what would a user of this variety feel when his or her attempts at participating in the wider world of English have failed?" Furthermore how would he or she feel when this English has not given access to the resources of knowledge that it should have?

Finally in response to this question, Quirk (1990) warns, as we have seen earlier in this study, that all the students know perfectly well that their command of standard English is likely to increase their freedom and their career prospects.

3.3.1 The status of educated South African black English (ESABE)

The concept of "Educated South African black English" in this thesis should be taken to be effectively involved with standard English or general purpose English (excluding accent). In terms of Schmied's model, educated South African black English can be located between the "mesolect" and the "acrolect" levels. We must hasten to say that it is not a new variety of English. We need to examine whether our "educated black English" could be institutionalised as a new variety of English and perhaps be used in the ESL classrooms. What, furthermore, of the "multicultural" classroom where the pupils are not exclusively native speakers of English or 2L learners?

We have to explore Quirk's concept of "institutionalisation". This refers to what Quirk (1995:24) refers to as varieties that are "fully described and with defined standards

observed by the institutions of state." These varieties are codified and they have dictionaries, grammar and a wealth of written literature. Only two varieties of English are institutionalised, American English and British English, and there are others with standards rather informally established, notably Australian English.

South African native English is not yet institutionalised, even though in orthography, lexis and grammar this variety for most educated use is virtually identical to both British and American English. On the other hand, it is not even clear if a "black variety" of English in general terms exists or not, especially as a new variety. It is also inconceivable to even contemplate a fixed point in the competence continuum where the black variety of English could be ready to assume the status of an ideal pedagogic language model in education. Before educated black English in South Africa can be considered as an ideal ESL black model, a number of issues have to be fully explored.

Given the following pockets of different categories of the users of educated black English, it is indeed very difficult to assume or guess where that fixed point should be:

- (a) There are those who have received their education at the top private English medium schools so that their English proficiency is almost similar to that of the English native speakers.
- (b) There are those who have received their education from Model C schools which have recently been opened for other race groups. They are state-aided schools (they are about to become public schools) in which the teachers are skilled, well trained and motivated. The graduates from these schools are also articulate and have a good command of English.
- (c) The pre-1976 group who received their education from the defunct Department of Bantu Education schools under relatively stable and conditions conducive to ESL learning. Teachers were also motivated then. This group of graduates also has a relatively good command of English.
- (d) All those in the former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools

in the last 15 years.

- (e) The remnants of the pre-1953 mission education who received a high standard of English teaching. Although there are only a few of them alive, they have a very good command of English.
- (f) Those who received their education abroad from the English speaking countries. These also have an excellent command of the language.

One is tempted to ask whether pockets could be extended to regions, even to very localised areas or particular schools, and to rural versus urban usage. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore how pockets would affect the viability and mobility of pupils and teachers.

In addition, those matriculants in former DET schools who have obtained $\pm C$ symbols could also be counted as "educated". All the above categories would be placed towards the top of the cline (between the mesolect and acrolect levels of proficiency). Their proficiency also varies according to the level of their exposure to the first language environment and the type of ESL teachers they have had. Interestingly enough, educated South African black English cannot simply be determined by the levels of formal education as noted earlier. All the above pockets of different categories of users of educated black English, need to be seen within a continuum.

Quirk (1990) argues that the native varieties as indicated earlier in this section e.g. American and British English, share a notable stability as compared with non-native varieties. He makes the point that native varieties resemble non-native varieties to a slight extent in being on a socio-economic cline, such that the features marking an individual as being a speaker of Yorkshire English tend to disappear the higher up the socio-economic scale he or she happens to be. Some measure of accent is likely to remain.

Kachru (1986) makes a clear distinction between "educated Indian English" and the "general purpose English" advocated by Quirk at the conference in 1995. He claims that

educated Indian English provides a regulative norm, which is available in good academic departments of English, at institutions of higher learning, on the All Radio (Akashwami) and on the programmes of national television. One wonders though, how far apart from accent does this differ from the international standard English. Furthermore, one wonders how the users of educated Indian English access the international and major national newspapers. Elsewhere Kachru seems to condone basilect varieties, even suggesting basilectal models for education (eg bazaar English (1991)). This debate poses two related problems: firstly, that of a definition of "Indian English", used so far loosely to refer to a variety which is different from standard English; secondly, many scholars' view that the distinctive Indian features are phonological.

In response to Kachru's claim, Quirk (1990) argues that although Kachru has been publishing on Indian English for 25 years "... prolifically, eloquently and elegantly", there is still no grammar, dictionary or phonological description for any of these non-native norms that is, or could hope to become, recognised as authoritative in India, a description to which teacher and learner in India could turn for normative guidance, and from which pedagogical materials could be derived and which education departments would endorse as the pedagogical model.

Schmied (1991: 174) takes the issue of developing a local variety of English further. He argues that a closer look at this issue reveals some of the issues involved:

- * a detailed description of the performance varieties at all levels of the continuum;
- * the identification of an acceptable level for a standard that would on the one hand be sufficiently close to other standards of English, especially the international standard, to ensure linguistic intelligibility, and on the other hand sufficiently distinct from them to convey African culture and identity;
- * the codification of this national variety in dictionaries, grammars or teaching handbooks;

All these concerns will be discussed in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 9.

In summing up, it was noted earlier in this study that Patkowski provides a more tenable and elaborate language proficiency framework than the limited three phases advocated by Schmied and Kachru.

According to Patkowski's model, one can surmise that educated "black English" goes through the five language development phases. However, this "variety" probably begins at the fourth phase up to the fifth - called "full proficiency" and "native proficiency" respectively. At this "educated" level, it is assumed that the ESL user has excellent control of grammar, few errors are made and the few errors that occur are still random; vocabulary is also broad, precise and literate. In other words, this "variety" is close to the international standard English.

3.3.2 The notion of a pedagogical norm

When discussing language varieties, the notion of pedagogical norm becomes central to the whole debate. Earlier in this study, we have asked crucial questions relating to the existence of "black English":

- * Where on the cline does one make the choice of black English?
- * What does the teacher teach?
- * What goes into grammar and textbooks?
- * Is black English codifiable?

Gough (1996: 8) makes an interesting observation. He echoes Wright's (1995:8) point when he says "non-standard black South African English is to some extent 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".

Earlier in this chapter, three models showing the different proficiency levels of ESL learners have been discussed. Patkowski's model was identified to be a more comprehensive and plausible language proficiency framework than the other models

propounded by Kachru and Schmied. Patkowski's model shows the ESL learner's language competency phases. At the fifth phase (Native Proficiency), the ESL user has native control of grammar, vocabulary equal to that of an educated native. In other words, the pedagogical norm in this case, is the fifth phase of Patkowski's model. This is equivalent to what Quirk calls "general purpose English".

However, Valdman (1975) approaches this debate from a different perspective. He examines social groups in a speech community with a range of speech styles which are determined by co-existing norms.

Valdman (1975) maintains that traditionally, in the teaching of highly standardised languages, particularly the so-called "languages of culture" such as English, French, German and Spanish, the monitored speech of educated native speakers has been set as the "target" appropriate for foreign and ESL learners (c.f. section 3.3 and Chapter 5). He argues that this approach of non-native users of English adopting the educated native variety of English as the only target, is too restrictive and that, instead, attainment of near-native proficiency in a foreign or second language should entail the capacity to perceive the total repertoire of target speakers rather than a particular norm. This debate boils down to the language functions noted in chapter one. For example, standard English is the language of access to a vast range of cultural, scientific and economic activities, whereas non-standard English is used for non-educational purposes. It is important to note that the choice of any language variety should be informed by the functions it fulfils. Some of these functions have been highlighted earlier in Section 3.1.

Valdman argues that in order to communicate effectively with all segments of multilingual communities, ESL or EFL learners need to control their linguistic repertoire. Quirk (1995) develops this point and makes it even much clearer when he argues that being fully competent in standard English is of prime importance not only for professional development and geographical mobility, but for sharing in all aspects of general life.

In addition, Valdman's model looks at language issues more broadly. Unlike Kachru,

Schmied and Patkowski, Valdman looks beyond the language proficiency framework used by a particular speech community. Valdman's model reaffirms the notion of language functions noted earlier in this study. It clearly shows the reason why people choose a particular norm in a speech community. This reminds us of the fact that people do not simply learn a second language - but that they learn it for a purpose.

Valdman gives a multi-target model of language variation (c.f. Figure 1).

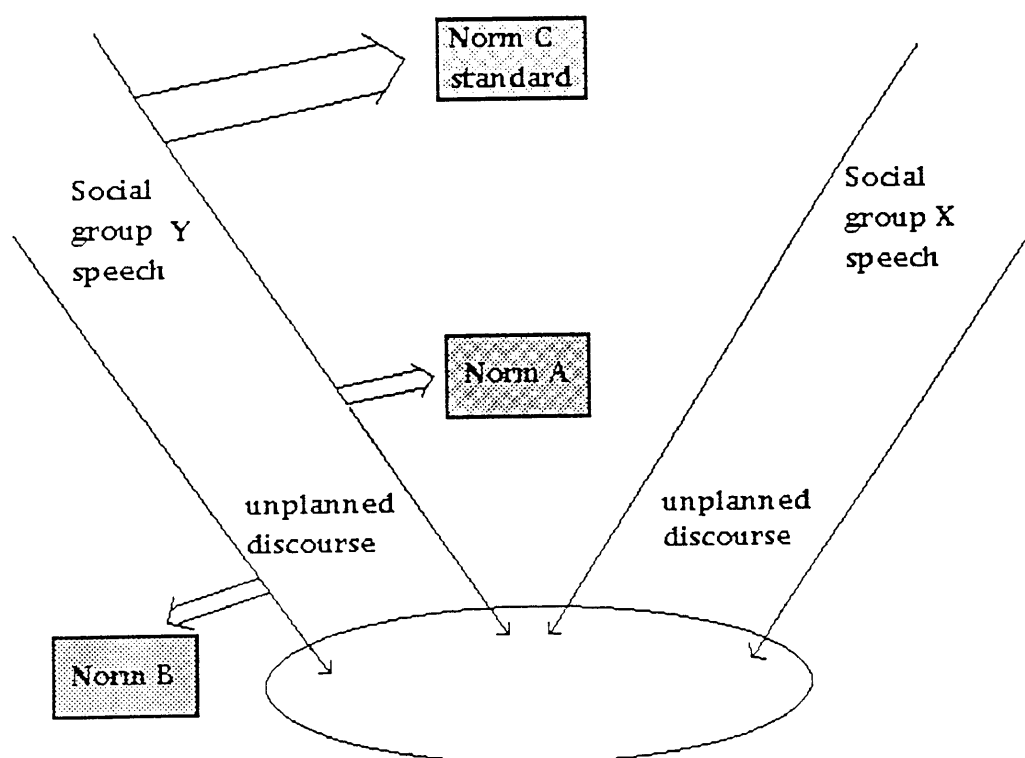


FIGURE 1: MULTI-TARGET MODEL OF LANGUAGE VARIATIONS

He claims that all social groups in a speech community have available a range of speech styles determined by co-existing norms. The boxes labelled Norm A, Norm B and Norm C respectively represent alternative norms available to the various social groups of a speech community. This model is more applicable to the American language situation where there are standard and established non-standard language norms. Valdman's model demonstrates the tensions that may arise in the context where mother tongue speakers of non-standard English are forced by circumstances to learn the standard

form.

Only two social groups are posited, X and Y. The widths of the arrows reflect the relative power of attraction exercised on a particular social group by a given norm.

Shift in norm orientation is determined by the social identity speakers wish to signify in the course of a particular speech event. In daily communicative interactions with their peers, speakers make use of their vernacular. In complex communities one of the norms becomes associated with political power and or prestige. This prestigious variety undergoes a gradual process of uniformisation and gains the status of standard.

Within the framework of the multi-target norm model, Valdman proposes to account for the variation present in the input to non-standard English learners. The interlingual continuum may be viewed as a vector which is oriented toward a particular norm by filtering input and by controlling feedback (c.f. Figure 2):

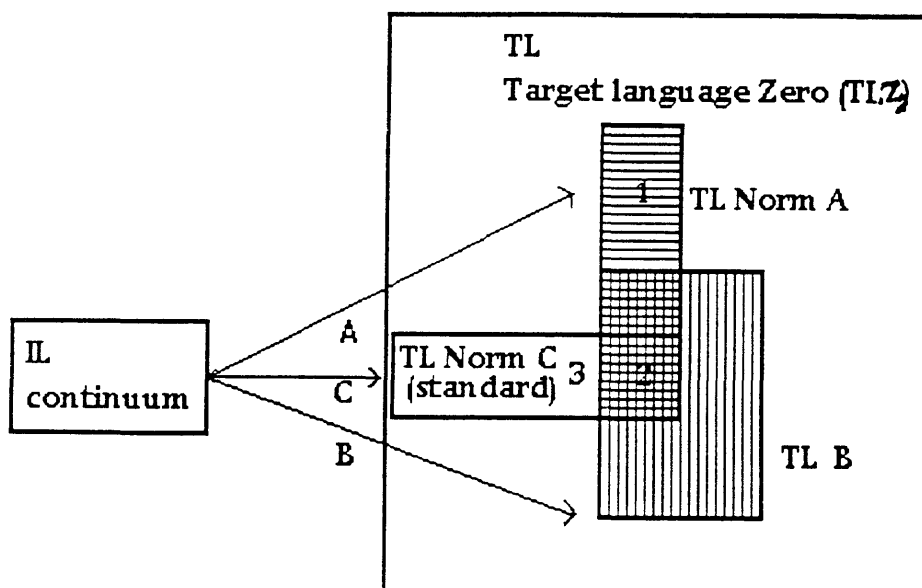


FIGURE 2: TARGET LANGUAGE ZERO (TLO)

This second model is actually applicable to the South African language debate too. One can apply it to black languages, non-standard and standard varieties. The largest block represents the totality of attested TL variants. This system encompasses features shared

by all TL varieties, as well as the totality of variable features. The three smaller blocks represent competing norms, one of which is the standard norm (Norm C). The interlingual continuum may be controlled to a certain extent by selection and sequencing of linguistic features, by instructional procedures and lastly by the elaboration of pedagogical norms.

If we try to apply this model to the main debate regarding English in the global context, the competing target language varieties would refer firstly to the institutionalised varieties of English: the American and the British varieties.

Secondly, the model as noted earlier applies to non-standard native varieties of English. All the non-standard and/or non-native varieties of English and their pedagogic norm depend mainly on the functions of these different varieties of English in that community. For example, in South Africa as pointed out earlier, we need standard English to fulfil the following functions (c.f. Section 3.1 and Chapter 1 for full discussion):

- * for science and technology
- * the requirements of the law and of legislation must be met
- * for government, parliament and of the civil service
- * for business and commerce
- * for international communication
- * for secondary and tertiary education
- * for access to books in libraries

In addition we need standard English to serve as a lingua franca locally and as well as an international language.

Corson's (1994) notion of "appropriateness" becomes pertinent in this case too. For example, a mother tongue non-standard English user may choose Norm A or B in his or her speech community. At school particularly at the lower primary classes, he or she can switch from Norm A or B to the standard Norm C. In the case of a non-native learner of English, Norm A or B, may be one or two official black languages. The

standard Norm C can only be taught and acquired at school - and to a less extent through the media, especially the electronic media. In figure 1, we have noted that the wider arrow from social group Y is pointing at Norm C (standard variety). It was also shown that this situation reflects the relative power of attraction exercised on a particular social group by a given norm. This attraction relates to language functions pointed out earlier.

In South Africa, ESL learners at the moment, especially at school, cannot aim at the so called "black variety" because it is not fully documented or developed. Members of the black English speech community at the lower end of the continuum, should aim at the "acrolect" (Schmied, 1991) level or Patkowski's fourth (full professional proficiency) and fifth (native proficiency) levels noted earlier in this study. These levels are referred to as "educated" varieties of English. Educated varieties of English are equivalent to standard English or general purpose English.

However, Wright (1993:4) argues that "if the possibility of communicating successfully outside the speech community is desired, adherence to the standard form of whatever linking language has been instituted is vital." In this case, standard English would be a more viable option. In Valdman's model, black ESL learners in South Africa, especially in education, would opt for Norm C. Other norms (A and B) are not yet fully developed, i.e. other varieties of English or "vernaculars".

Furthermore, we have seen earlier in this study that despite the influence of American English in commerce and in the entertainment industry, British English is very much on the ascendent, particularly after the collapse of the communist order across Europe. It is the variety that has existed through dictionaries and grammars in South Africa. A change would have consequences of book supply. In any case, there is not much difference between these two major varieties.

It is imperative at this point, to spell out that the South African language debate is unique and it differs to a large extent from the other "outer circle" Englishes. Quite different is the status of English in other former British colonies such as India, Nigeria, Ghana or in the former American possession of the Philippines. These countries were

not extensively settled by English speakers. English has always been an additional language for the vast majority of the inhabitants.

On the other hand the difference between the educated "black" and "white" varieties in South Africa, is very minimal and negligible, excluding accent. Probably, the first impression that anyone has of a speaker of a non-native or non-standard mother tongue variety of English is that he or she sounds different or has a different accent. This means that the way this person speaks may indicate what social class he or she belongs to or what region he or she comes from or what country or ethnic background he or she comes from. It is admitted that accent is a regional marker but not part of the standard English package, as has been explained earlier. The concept of "accent", will be explored further in chapter 4.

The main reason why this study investigates English used by black people in South Africa as "black English" is probably due to the following historical motivation and concerns:

- (1) The majority of black teachers have always taught and still are exclusively teaching black students, especially at the primary and secondary levels.
- (2) The vast majority of their white counterparts, have had the privilege of receiving decent education and teacher training. The vast majority of black ESL learners did not have access and exposure to these skilled teachers. Subsequently, black education became neglected. The standard of English teaching declined leading to what Buthelezi (1989) calls "a vicious cycle" perpetuated by poorly trained teachers. We have seen earlier in this thesis that Buthelezi refers to ESL fossilised features used by some of the blacks as South African black English.
- (3) There is also a limited number of white schools with blacks in the minority.
- (4) The English medium schools, especially Model C and private schools admit students from all racial backgrounds, but teachers remain almost exclusively white.

This fourth point creates the feeling within black communities and among the students involved that whites provide better education and black schools offer second and third grade education. There are also several black teachers who are equally or more skilled than some white teachers. These black teachers could not in the past and still cannot easily get employment in white schools, whereas whites could and still can easily cross the floor from their education system to the black education system. Furthermore, it reinforces the notion that the "best" and "proper" English for non-native learners can only be provided by English mother tongue speakers. The point one is making here is that ESL should be taught by both black and white skilled teachers which will reflect the spirit of the changing South Africa. However, the target should be standard English. And the existence of black English is queried and even the existence of a teachable black English is seen as doubtful.

- (5) Finally, the conditions created by the now scrapped divisive policies of South Africa have produced a fragmented South African society.

The language policies which have currently been proclaimed for the new dispensation in South Africa, should be able to address the five major concerns expressed above. The whole debate in this study boils down to underlying attitudes and stereotypes held by both white and black communities, which have been created and nurtured by apartheid policies of South Africa. Quirk (1990), as quoted earlier in this study, argued that even though Kachru had been publishing on Indian English, eloquently and elegantly, for 25 years, he had not managed to produce any grammar and dictionary description for the varieties of English he claimed to be defending and representing. This same challenge by Quirk, can be directed to us today in South Africa. Questions such as the following can be asked: Does "black English" propounded in this study have or would ever have its own grammar and dictionary? Will this variety be developed to an extent of being a pedagogical model in education? These are indeed very complex questions. However, one can speculate that it will take some generations for codifiable black English to emerge, if it does it should be examined within the international perspective. In other words, the emergence of codified black English will be determined by the status and functions of standard English internationally.

In addition, we have no books compiled on this variety and there are no teachers trained to teach it. The list of these sorts of concerns and questions is endless. The proposition this study seeks to make is that educated "black" and "white" varieties of English should not be developed separately. There seems to be no need for this. Strevens (c.f. Section 3.1.2 for full discussion) has put this point aptly when he referred to the international educated variety of English: it has been universally accepted in the English speaking world as the only appropriate model for educational use. It has been mentioned earlier in this study that non-native English speakers look to the standard language of mother tongue speakers, chiefly standard British English and standard American English, for their norms. This is similar to Valdman's Norm C (standard English) discussed earlier in this section.

It was also stated that attitudes are divided as to the norms for English where it is used chiefly for intranational communication. In South Africa, standard British English has always been the norm for both the native and the non-native users including Received Pronunciation and the written form.

For short term purposes, while other options are being considered, we have shown throughout this study that standard English is the only viable option in education and it should continue to serve as a model in schools. This option in future will depend largely on whether the following factors prevail:

- * ESL teachers are adequately trained
- * teacher education is improved
- * ESL schools have adequate resources
- * teacher/pupil ratio in ESL classrooms is addressed (This issue is currently being addressed)
- * black and white schools are integrated
- * overcrowding in black schools is adequately addressed.

Most importantly, English teachers, both black and white, will need a thorough training or retraining. More resources in ESL teaching should be made available. There should be more school-based teacher development programmes to empower those teachers who

are presently not adequately skilled in teaching English, especially ESL. (This issue is fully discussed in chapter 9 of this study).

3.4 CONCLUSION

At this point, it may be helpful to recapitulate by giving in full the definition of standard English as described by Quirk and Stein (1990: 113, citing Webster's Third ed):

1. the English taught in schools
2. English that is current, reputable and national
3. the English that with respect to spelling, grammar (pronunciation) and vocabulary is substantially uniform though not devoid of regional differences, that is well-established by usage in the formal and informal (speech) and writing of the educated, and that is widely recognised as acceptable wherever English is (spoken) and understood
4. all words entered in a general English language dictionary that are not restricted by a label (as slang, dial etc).

In addition, it was noted earlier that Quirk conceives standard English to be basically the shared vocabulary of the English-speaking countries with the shared vocabulary spoken 99,9% of the time, written for 0,1%. Quirk now uses the term "general purpose English".

Quirk and Stein (1995: 113) argue that "pronunciation" is the aspect of English which (in their view, as opposed to Webster's) is least applicable when talking about standard English.

The standard of English in South African black education has suffered rapid deterioration, for reasons stated in the previous section (c.f. Section 3.3.2). It seems the higher the level of education and exposure to standard English speakers, the greater

the tendency for a black South African learner to use standard English as a yardstick for measuring his or her own competence.

Sey (1973) maintains that poor use of English (in Ghana) is considered disgraceful and most unworthy of an educated person. Ahulu has been quoted to the same effect elsewhere. A single grammatical error in the speech of a public speaker, even if it is immediately corrected, is an almost indelible stigma on his public image. This situation is also common among ESL users in South Africa, especially with grammatical "errors". If deviations or errors are pointed out, the ESL user is likely to avoid them in future.

One has to admit that English used by the vast majority of South African blacks is characterised by the persistence of peculiar forms and usages that are basically found at the basilectal level. However pronunciation is probably the most prominent and remarkable feature of ESL (c.f. section 4.3).

Furthermore, if the situation in ESL classrooms is not attended to, there is indeed a real danger that English could degenerate into a kind of backwater cut off from the international mainstream. The point we are making in this study, is not against the development of a brand of English, that can be recognised as "black English". The point is, as long as it contains a substantial common core that will make it intelligible to other English users, then there will be no need for accentuating those negligible regional or community peculiarities.

To sum up this discussion, Wright (1993:6-7) warns that "the truth may be unwelcome to some, but it seems unavoidable that in today's world of interdependent national states, the only English standard which educational authorities can reasonably implement is the international standard". He further argues that non-native varieties "enrich the expressive potential of the language, a potential which is exploited by ordinary people in daily life and by imaginative writers." He finally maintains that "the very characteristics which allow them to perform these functions unfit them for service as a standard language."
