

## Articles in Zimbabwean English: A corpus-based analysis

Faith Chiedza Chapwanya<sup>1</sup> and Joanine Hester Nel<sup>\*2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Afrikaans, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8298-9606>

<sup>2</sup>Department of Afrikaans, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa, Email: [joanine.nel@up.ac.za](mailto:joanine.nel@up.ac.za)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7618-6014>

\* Corresponding author

**Abstract:** This study investigated the usage frequency of articles in the Zimbabwean English (ZE) corpus and the International corpus of English Great Britain (ICE-GB) to determine whether there are variations between the two corpora. A log-likelihood test was used to determine whether the observed variations were statistically significant. In addition, eight morphosyntactic features that are reported to show variation by Kortmann et al. (2020) were used to determine whether innovation and nativisation occurs in ZE and to ascertain the stage of ZE in the dynamic model (DM). A comparative analysis revealed statistically significant variations in the normalised frequency (per 10 000 words) of the indefinite article, with the ICE-GB recording a higher normalised frequency. Regarding the zero article, the normalised frequency was higher in the ZE corpus compared to the ICE-GB. There were no significant differences in the usage frequencies of the definite article in the two corpora. The findings indicate that the eight features belong to different categories from A to D. Data analysis showed that ZE is at stage 2 of the DM because features 62, 63, and 65 existed, but were extremely rare, and at stage 3 since feature 67 was neither pervasive nor extremely rare.

**Keywords:** Zimbabwean English; articles; dynamic model; corpus-based analysis; linguistic innovation; nativisation

### 1. Introduction

The global diffusion of English has led to linguistic innovation and nativisation in second language (L2) English varieties because, in communities where English is used as an L2, the language adapts to the local environment (Kachru 1992; Schneider 2003, 2007). Within the context of World Englishes (WE), linguistic innovation refers to when a linguistic feature has been accepted and is subsequently used within a language community, while nativisation refers to the process of language accommodation and

adaptation to the language users' circumstances (Gough 1996; Schneider 2003, 2007; Chapwanya 2022). Differences in culture, religion and politics may lead to L2 English speakers using English differently, resulting in different variations occurring in L2 language use, especially in terms of linguistic innovation and nativisation (Kachru 1992). These variations, in terms of speakers using different morphosyntactic features, are of interest to researchers, specifically in this study, because it seeks to examine whether there is innovation in the use of articles in Zimbabwean English (ZE). The aim of this study is to investigate the characteristic features of ZE and to compare the frequency of articles in an L2 variety (ZE) and a first language (L1) variety (British English) in order to show possible grammatical stabilisation of a feature in the L2 variety (Bamgbose 1998). The features explored are based on Kortmann et al.'s (2020) description of innovation features for articles (see table 1 for an overview of features 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, and 67). In addition, the study seeks to ascertain which stage of the dynamic model (DM) of postcolonial Englishes ZE falls in by establishing whether the morphosyntactic features for articles can be regarded as innovations in ZE. Even though the DM has been used in the study of WE, the model has been applied minimally to other morphosyntactic features of ZE (e.g. Marungudzi 2016). Table 1 provides a description of the different features of articles with examples.

**Table 1:** Variations occurring with article use (Source: Kortmann et al., 2020)

Feature number and description	Examples
60: The use of the definite article where StE uses the indefinite article.	<i>I'm <u>the</u> vegetarian.</i>
61: The use of the indefinite article where StE uses the definite article.	<i><u>A</u> sun was shining.</i>
62: The use of the zero article where StE uses the definite article	<i><u>∅</u> main reason for their performance...</i>
63: The use of the zero article where StE uses the indefinite article.	<i>He was <u>∅</u> good man.</i>
64: The use of the definite article where StE favours the use of the zero article.	<i>I'm very scared of <u>the</u> AIDS.</i>
65: The use of the indefinite article where StE favours the use of the zero article.	<i>You're going to have <u>a</u> trouble.</i>
66: The use of the indefinite article <i>one/wan</i> .	<i>Boy, it was <u>one</u> long wait.</i>
67: The use of demonstratives in the place of the definite article.	<i>It's <u>that</u> guy that doesn't want it.</i>

While morphosyntactic features 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, and 67 have been studied in African English (e.g. Gough 1996; De Klerk 2003; Mesthrie 2006; Botha 2013; Makalela

2013; Akinlotan 2017; Kruger & Van Rooy 2017), there are still gaps regarding the use of different morphosyntactic features for articles in ZE. Marungudzi's (2016) study focussed on the extension of *be* + *V-ing* for stative verbs (feature 88); the deletion of the auxiliary *be* before the progressive (feature 174); the deletion of the auxiliary *be* before *gonna* (feature 175); the use of resumptive pronouns (feature 194); the addition of *the* infinitive *to* in comparison to the use of the bare infinitive in standard English (feature 209); the use of *too*, *too much* and *very much* in the place of the qualifier *very* (feature 222); the use of inverted word order in indirect questions (feature 227); and the use of *like* as a focussing device (feature 234). Furthermore Kadenge (2012) worked on the lexical and semantic features of ZE. However, there is still a dearth in the examination of articles in ZE within the WE framework. This study attempts to close the gap in research by analysing the abovementioned use of morphosyntactic features for articles in ZE (Kortmann et al. 2020), which are reported to be attested in other African English (AE) varieties such as Black South African English (BSAE), Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, and Cameroon English. Since ZE is a type of AE, this paper contributes to the study of AE. Examining these features will allow for future comparisons of ZE with other AE varieties. Overall, the current study adds to earlier contributions on ZE (e.g. Makoni 1992, 1993; Mlambo 2009; Kadenge 2009, 2010, 2012; Marungudzi 2016) and is located within the field of WE with a focus on innovation and nativisation in ZE. Following a pluricentric approach to WE, which recognises that there are different varieties of English around the world, the term "Zimbabwean English" is used to refer to the English that is spoken by Shona mother-tongue speakers (cf. Kadenge 2010; Marungudzi 2016). The following research questions were posed:

1. What is the frequency of article usage in the ZE corpus and the ICE-GB and are the variations in usage between the corpora statistically significant?
2. Does the use of articles in ZE show innovation in terms of the occurrence of morphosyntactic features (60 - 67) for articles?
3. At which stage of the dynamic model of postcolonial English does ZE fall when considering the use and occurrence of the morphosyntactic features for articles?

## 2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the DM (Schneider 2003, 2007) which suggests that speech communities where English is not an L1 undergo five stages of development. Stage 1 is comprised of the creation of a linguistic foundation and language contact between English and indigenous languages, while stage 2 entails exonormative stabilisation, the emergence of innovation features (such as those outlined in table 1), nativisation, linguistic transfer on a structural and phonological level, and the spread of bilingualism. Nativisation, cultural and linguistic transformation, heavy lexical borrowing, and change at lexico-grammatical level, as evidenced by the frequency and usage patterns of innovation features are characteristic of stage 3 while endonormative stabilisation of the innovations is a hallmark of stage 4 (Schneider 2003). The above-mentioned innovation features are accepted as norms and used in formal channels of communication by the majority of the population. Lastly, stage 5 is comprised of differentiation, which is characterised by the solidification of the new variety.

Previous research on ZE has highlighted some of the features of the DM that are characteristic of stages 1 to 3. For instance, the characteristics of stage 1 of the DM are evident due to the introduction of English during colonialism, when English was promoted to an official language and still to this day has a higher status than indigenous languages in education, trade, and government (Kadenge 2009). The other official languages as per the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (Number 20) Act of 2013 are Barwe, Chewa, Kalanga, Khoisan, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zimbabwean sign language. In Zimbabwe, most learners have minimal to no English language exposure outside the classroom and become bilingual at school (Thondhlana 2002). Language contact and borrowing between English and indigenous languages form part of the features that are characteristic of stage 1. This language contact and borrowing is evident in ZE as can be seen in the direct lexical transfer of Shona terms into ZE occurring in the novels *Bones* and *Ancestors* by Chenjerai Hove (Kadenge 2012). Kadenge gives examples of indigenous foods such as *sadza* (“*pap*” or “maize meal”), indigenous fruit trees like *muonde* and *muhacha* (“fig tree”), traditional dances like *muchongoyo* and *mbakumba*, and traditional children’s games such as *dudu muduri* and *mahumbwe*.

Regarding stage 3 of the DM, evidence points to nativisation and change at the lexico-

grammatical level in ZE as shown by Kadenge's (2009) exploration of the effects of Shona phonology on the pronunciation of English vowels by ZE speakers. Kadenge observes that vowel length reduction is apparent and suggests that the phonological processes manifesting in the speech of ZE users point to indigenisation and nativisation. Marungudzi's (2016) study on using the DM to frame ZE, examined eight morphosyntactic features (cf. section 1) listed on the electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English (eWAVE) available at (<https://ewave-atlas.org/>). The eWAVE, categorises features as pervasive or obligatory (category A), neither pervasive nor extremely rare (category B), exists, but extremely rare (category C), and attested absence of the feature (category D). The same categories mentioned above were used for data analysis in the current study. Results from Marungudzi's study show that these features are neither pervasive nor extremely rare and can be regarded as features of ZE. Furthermore, Marungudzi situates ZE at stage 2 (exonormative stabilisation) and stage 3 (nativisation) of the DM and attributed the variations in ZE to overgeneralisation, simplification strategies, and L1 influence. While the studies discussed above offer valuable insights into ZE, the current study aims to add to the discussion by examining different features of articles suggested on the eWAVE to ascertain how stable the features are in ZE, which will assist in determining the stage of ZE in the DM.

### **3. Articles and African Englishes**

According to Quirk et al. (1985, p. 245), articles are examples of central determiners, "which occur before a noun acting as head of the noun phrase (or before its premodifiers)" as shown in the example *the girl*, where the definite article *the* occurs before the noun *girl*, which is the head of the noun phrase (NP). The different types of articles that occur as determiners include the definite article *the*, the indefinite article *a/an*, and the zero article  $\emptyset$ . The definite article is used where there is a clear reference to the NP (Master 1997). Hawkins (1978) asserts that placing a definite article before a referring predicate helps to focus the listener's attention on a limited number of objects being referred to by the speaker. For example, in the phrase *the horse*, placing the definite article *the* before the noun *horse* refers to a particular horse. In standard English (StE), the indefinite article "is typically used when the referent has not been mentioned before and is assumed to be unfamiliar to the speaker or hearer" (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 272). The indefinite article *a* occurs before consonant sounds (e.g. *a textbook*) whilst the indefinite article *an* occurs before vowel sounds, for example, *an intruder* (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 272). With the zero

article, nouns are not preceded by an article as shown in: *∅ Cats like sleeping* (cf. Master 1997).

Article usage in AE has garnered considerable scholarly attention as evidenced by a plethora of studies on the topic. One of the topics and varieties of AE, on which substantial research has been conducted, includes the focus on articles in BSAE. Research shows that BSAE speakers insert articles where StE does not have an article (e.g. *He was in a pain*), omit or delete articles (e.g. *He was ∅ good man*), and substitute articles that are obligatory in StE with different articles (e.g. Gough 1996; Greenbaum & Mbali 2002; Mesthrie & Bhatt 2008; Minow 2010; Botha 2013). An example of article substitution is “*He smashed the vase in the rage*” (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, p. 50). Other studies, such as Wahid (2013), compare article usage in private dialogues, academic writing and reportage in Inner Circle and Outer Circle varieties of English. Variations were reported in the use of the definite article in the three genres.

Nigerian English, an AE variety, was the focus of Akinlotan’s (2017) analysis. The author investigated the extent of variation in the use of articles in Nigerian English using the International corpus of English-Nigeria and reports on variability in the use of articles and on the fact that indigenous Nigerian languages have distinct article systems, which influence the use of articles in Nigerian English, thereby superseding the influence of genre. Still focusing on variability in article usage in L2 Englishes, the rules of a speaker’s L1, which has a lower status as a substrate language compared to English, have been credited with variations between L1 and L2 varieties of English by some researchers (cf. Mesthrie 2006; Makalela 2013; Marungudzi 2016) whilst other researchers (e.g. Sand 2004) could not substantiate the role of the substrate language in article use. In addition to the abovementioned studies, article usage in different AE varieties such as Ugandan English, Tanzanian English, and Ghanaian English has also been explored as shown in table 1 (cf. Kortmann et al. 2020). These variations were used as the basis for analysis in this study.

In the Zimbabwean context, Fitzmaurice (2020) investigated different morphosyntactic features of articles in White Zimbabwean English (WZE). Her study focused on English being used as an L1 in Zimbabwe and spoken by about 5% of the population. The current study is different to that of Fitzmaurice (2020) because articles were examined in the L2 English context, where 75% of the population speaks Shona as an L1. Results from

Fitzmaurice's study show that features 60, 62, 66, and 67 exist in WZE, but are extremely rare whilst features 61, 63, 64, and 65 are not attested in WZE.

#### **4. Methodology**

From a usage-based perspective, a corpus-based analysis was done to examine a corpus of ZE and the ICE-GB (cf. Anthony 2013). After obtaining ethical clearance (number GW20181012HS), from the faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, the procedures followed during data collection were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Humanities ethical clearance committee on human experimentation, the South African laws and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2008 (5). Participants completed informed consent forms and pseudonyms were used to identify participants, assuring confidentiality throughout data collection and anonymity and confidentiality in subsequent reporting. A mixed-method sampling technique encompassing three non-probability sampling methods namely, snowball-, convenience- and purposive sampling was used to gather data in different parts of Zimbabwe. Private semi-scripted dialogues and private dialogues were recorded in different social situations, from rural and urban participants aged at least 18, whose socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds varied. Online newspaper articles (editorials and newspaper reportage) were also collected from May 2019 to December 2019.

The researchers compiled 206 007 words and part of Marungudzi's (2016) corpus (150 000 words) was added<sup>1</sup>. In total, the ZE corpus consists of 356 007 words. The international corpus of English (ICE) conventions of corpus design and annotation (at textual mark-up level) were followed (cf. Nelson 2002a, 2002b). Texts were grouped into spoken and written texts. Spoken texts were classified according to their genres. For example, spoken private semi-scripted dialogue 3 refers to the third spoken semi-scripted text. Similarly, for written texts, editorials 1 refers to the first sample of written editorials. This distinction between spoken and written forms needs to be made since each register and genre outlines different features and purposes in terms of language use. Subsequently data analysis on the frequency of articles involved register and genre

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<sup>1</sup>Although permission was given to use Marungudzi's corpus from North-West University, access to only 150 000 words out of the 390 000 words was provided because he passed away in January 2018 before handing the corpus over to the university. This meant that the data collection process had to be adapted to collect more samples than originally planned.

distinctions. Sketch Engine, an online text analysis tool, automatically did part-of-speech tagging and was used for corpus analysis.

The second corpus used is part of the ICE-GB (release 2), consisting of 608 235 words. Only samples that occurred in both the ZE corpus and the ICE-GB were used for comparison purposes. The wordlist and concordance tools in Sketch Engine were utilised to generate a list of words and to do frequency counts of *a/an*, and *the*. Since there were 79 176 nouns in the ZE corpus and 98 435 nouns in the ICE-GB, it was necessary to do random sampling of 400 nouns in each corpus for the calculation of the zero article (cf. Sison & Glaz 1995). The concordances to the left of nouns were checked to see if the zero article was used or whether the definite or indefinite article or any other determiner was used instead. In table 2, the projected distribution of the frequencies of the zero article in both corpora was based on results from random sampling and is indicated with a hash sign (#). Frequencies were normalised per 10 000 words and numbers were rounded off to the nearest unit. An online log-likelihood (LL) calculator created by Paul Rayson (<https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>) was used to report on the different levels of statistical significance. One asterisk (\*) shows that  $LL > 3.84$  where  $p < 0.05$ . Two asterisks (\*\*) were used where a critical value of 6.63 was significant at  $p < 0.01$ , whilst three asterisks (\*\*\*) represented a critical value of 10.83 where  $p < 0.001$ . Four asterisks (\*\*\*\*) symbolised that the  $LL > 15.13$  where  $p < 0.0001$ .

**Table 2:** Overall frequency of all articles (normalised per 10 000 words)

Article	ZE corpus		ICE-GB		Log likelihood
	Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	
<i>A/an</i>	6 159	173	12 168	200	87.63****
<i>The</i>	16 493	463	27 968	460	0.59
<i>Zero</i>	17 617#	495#	29 038#	477#	14.07**
Total	40 269	1 131	69 174	1 137	0.74

Several methods were employed to group features into specific categories, namely, category A, -B, -C, or -D, as explained in section 2. Firstly, the corpus was queried for the frequency counts because they show grammatical stabilisation of a feature (Bamgbose 1998). Secondly, cross-tabulation was done in percentages to count the number of times an article was used in a standard manner and the number of times an article was used in a non-standard manner. Thirdly, for a feature to be regarded as an innovation, it had to be attested in both spoken and written texts and in different genres,

to show acceptability, widespread and regular use within a speech community (cf. Bamgbose 1998; Van Rooy & Kruger 2016). Lastly, with the aim to ascertain the stability of features in ZE, authoritative measures and norm orientation were determined by checking if a feature was attested in texts that underwent editing (e.g. editorials and newspaper reportage) and formal texts (cf. Bamgbose 1998; Van Rooy & Kruger 2016). The following section discusses the results.

## **5. Results**

The discussion of the results will be subdivided into four main parts. Firstly, the overall frequency of all three article types will be outlined. Secondly, results according to and across registers will be discussed. Thirdly, results are reported across genres. Private dialogues and private semi-scripted dialogues were grouped as one genre, namely, as private dialogues, to report frequency results for genres. Fourthly, this section will discuss the results according to how articles are used in Zimbabwean English, with reference to the eight features outlined in table 1.

### **5.1. Overall frequency of articles in Zimbabwean English and British English**

The concordances of *a/an*, *the* and the zero article as determiners were searched in Sketch Engine. Results showing the frequency of the articles are displayed below.

The frequency of *a/an* per 10 000 words was higher in the ICE-GB (with 200 occurrences) compared to the ZE corpus (with 173 occurrences), which resulted in a highly significant difference (with the LL value  $> 15.13$  and  $p < 0.0001$ ). No significant differences were observed in the frequencies of *the* in the two corpora. The absolute and normalised frequency of the zero article was based on the projected distribution of the zero article. There were 89 occurrences of the zero article in 400 nouns in the ZE corpus and 118 occurrences in the ICE-GB. The frequency for the zero article (per 10 000 words) was higher in the ZE corpus (with 495 occurrences), compared to the ICE-GB (with 477 occurrences), which resulted in a highly significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ). Due to the fact that the LL values were below the lowest criterion level for statistical significance, the two corpora did not show significant differences in the overall frequency of *a/an*, *the* and the zero article.

## 5.2. Frequency of definite and indefinite articles across registers

Tables 3 and 4 present the frequency and LL values of the definite and indefinite articles in the spoken and written registers respectively.

**Table 3:** Frequency of *the* in the different registers (normalised per 10 000 words)

Register	ZE corpus		ICE-GB		Log likelihood
	Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	
Spoken	9 658	411	15 776	395	9.49**
Written	6 835	564	12 192	584	4.90*
Total	16 493	463	27 968	460	0.59

In table 3, *the* occurred more frequently per 10 000 words in the spoken register in the ZE corpus (with 411 occurrences) compared to the ICE-GB (with 395 occurrences), which resulted in a slightly significant difference (with the LL value > 6.63 and  $p < 0.01$ ). A different pattern emerged in the frequency of the definite article (per 10 000 words) in the written register since *the* was used more frequently in the ICE-GB (with 584 occurrences) compared to the ZE corpus (with 564 occurrences). This difference was slightly significant (with the LL value > 3.84).

**Table 4:** Frequency of *a/an* in the different registers (normalised per 10 000 words)

Register	ZE corpus		ICE-GB		Log likelihood
	Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	
Spoken	4 038	172	7 416	186	15.75****
Written	2 121	175	4 752	228	103.34****
Total	6 159	173	12 168	200	87.63****

The ICE-GB recorded higher normalised frequencies (per 10 000 words) of *a/an* in both the spoken registers (with 186 occurrences) and the written registers (with 228 occurrences) compared to the ZE corpus (with 172 and 175 occurrences per 10 000 words respectively). The significance of the observed variations was evident in the LL values for both registers, which were above the highest criterion level for statistical significance.

### 5.3. Frequency of definite and indefinite articles across genres

A comparative analysis of the frequency of *the* and *a/an* in different genres, together with LL values is shown in tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5:** Frequency of *the* in the different genres (normalised per 10 000 words)

Register	Genre	ZE corpus		ICE-GB		Log likelihood
		Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	
Spoken	Private dialogues	4 734	359	4 842	261	238.38****
	Public scripted monologues	221	527	2 847	661	11.24***
	Public dialogues	4 591	465	8 087	473	0.83
Written	Creative writing	1 040	581	2 180	511	11.46***
	Popular writing	148	536	1 573	742	15.58****
	Academic writing: Examinations	149	717	1 429	673	0.53
	Editorials	1 820	691	1 559	752	6.10*
	Newspaper reportage	2 980	609	2 761	665	10.99***
	Social letters	159	318	1 141	367	3.05
	Business letters	651	360	1 549	508	56.66****

The distribution of *the* in the different genres was considered, and it was observed that the highest difference in normalised frequency (per 10 000 words) was recorded in private dialogues in the ZE corpus (with 359 occurrences) compared to the ICE-GB (with 261 occurrences). Creative writing was another genre where a higher usage frequency of *the* in the ZE corpus (581 per 10 000 words) was apparent compared to the ICE-GB (with 511 occurrences per 10 000 words). A different pattern was observed for business letters, newspaper reportage, public scripted monologues, and popular writing since *the* occurred more frequently in the ICE-GB than in the ZE corpus (with LL values > 10.83 where  $p < 0.001$ ). *The* also occurred more frequently per 10 000 words in editorials in the ICE-GB (with 752 occurrences) than in the ZE corpus (691 occurrences with a LL > 3.84). No significant variations were recorded in social letters, academic writing and public dialogues.

Occurring 184 times per 10 000 words, business letters had the highest frequency of *a/an* in the ICE-GB compared to the ZE corpus (with 93 occurrences). *A/an* also occurred more in the ICE-GB in public scripted monologues, public dialogues, editorials, social letters, and newspaper reportage. In contrast, the indefinite article was more frequent per 10 000 words in the ZE corpus in private dialogues (with 185 occurrences) compared to

the ICE-GB (with 172 occurrences). Non-significant variations were observed in popular writing, academic writing and creative writing.

**Table 6:** Frequency of *a/an* in the different genres (normalised per 10 000 words)

Register	Genre	ZE corpus		ICE-GB		Log likelihood
		Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	Absolute frequency	Normalised frequency	
Spoken	Private dialogues	2 436	185	3 188	172	6.73**
	Public scripted monologues	57	136	942	219	14.31***
	Public dialogues	1 540	156	3 286	192	46.70****
Written	Creative writing	430	240	982	230	0.55
	Popular writing	61	221	562	265	1.90
	Academic writing: Examinations	43	207	495	233	0.58
	Editorials	470	178	450	217	8.86**
	Newspaper reportage	900	184	1 092	263	63.38****
	Social letters	54	108	611	197	21.18****
	Business letters	168	93	560	184	66.95****

#### **5.4. How articles are used in Zimbabwean English**

The corpus was analysed to check whether the features (60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, and 67) that are reported to show morphosyntactic variation are attested in ZE. Features were assigned to categories A, -B, -C, and -D depending on the classification criteria. Results from the present study were also compared with Fitzmaurice's (2020) study on WZE since ZE and WZE are contact varieties in Zimbabwe.

##### *5.4.1. The use of the definite article in ZE where StE uses the indefinite article: Feature 60*

Using the different functions of the definite article reported by Quirk et al. (1985, p. 265-272), the concordance lines of *the* were manually checked to see whether StE would have used an indefinite article. Data analysis showed that the use of a definite article where StE had an indefinite article was not prevalent in the ZE corpus, as it occurred twice in spoken texts (once in each of the two genres), as exemplified below:

(1) *We are all aware ZIFA is broke and we have been appealing to the corporate world the government to come in and and chip in and give the helping hand in football.*  
(Public dialogue 15)

(2) *Uh I can just say I was just a a man of or I can say the Jack of all trades. handball.*  
(Private semi-scripted dialogue 3)

The percentage of occurrence of feature 60 was 0.012% and the definite article was used in a standard way 99.98% of the time. Due to the very few occurrences, the two examples could be regarded as errors, and feature 60 belongs to category D, in which there is an attested absence of the feature. Kruger and Van Rooy (2017) emphasise that if a convention is not accepted, it will be confined to informal speech. Comparing ZE, an L2 English variety, with WZE, a high contact L1 variety, Fitzmaurice (2020) placed feature 60 in category C. When considering AE varieties, ZE shows similarities to Cape Flats English (Mesthrie et al. 2020) and Nigerian English (Taiwo 2020).

#### 5.4.2. *The use of the indefinite article in ZE where StE uses the definite article:*

##### *Feature 61*

There were 10 occurrences of feature 61 in one genre in the ZE corpus, as illustrated by the examples from the ZE corpus below.

(3) *I am the fourth born in a family.* (Private semi-scripted dialogue 7)

(4) *There are, there is, eh in Dubai that's where there is a tallest building in the world.*  
(Private semi-scripted dialogue 33)

Cross tabulation showed that feature 61 occurred 0.16% of the time and the indefinite article was used 99.84% of the time, meaning that feature 61 belongs to category D. Similar findings were reported by Fitzmaurice (2020) regarding feature 61 in WZE and therefore the feature was also assigned to category D. This feature also falls in category D in Nigerian English (Taiwo 2020), and Ghanaian English (Huber 2020).

#### 5.4.3. The use of the zero article in ZE where StE uses the definite article: Feature 62

Feature 62 occurred three times out of the 89 occurrences of the zero article in a sample of 400 nouns in the ZE corpus as illustrated below.

(5) *Concerning money issues, I was given \$1500 by Svodai at  $\emptyset$  start of this month, so I had to borrow \$1000 from Costain.* (Social letters 1)

(6)  *$\emptyset$  Problem is money.* (Social letters 1)

(7) *Uh there is a controversy since  $\emptyset$  Zimbabwean soccer team is always shifting gears.* (Private semi-scripted dialogue 3)

Cross-tabulation showed that feature 62 was attested 3.37% of the time and the zero article was used 96.63% of the time. Feature 62 was observed in both spoken and written registers, and can be assigned to category C. Interestingly, feature 62 was also assigned to category C in WZE (Fitzmaurice 2020) and BSAE (Mesthrie 2020).

#### 5.4.4. The use of the zero article in ZE where StE uses the indefinite article: Feature 63

Feature 63 occurred in both spoken and written registers in the ZE corpus and met the criteria of authoritative and norm orientation, warranting it to be assigned to category C, because the feature exists but is extremely rare. The percentage of occurrences for feature 63 was 2.25% and the suppliance rate of the zero article was 97.75%. As a way of comparison, BSAE was also assigned to category C by Mesthrie (2020) and there is an attested absence of feature 63 in WZE (Fitzmaurice 2020). Examples of feature 63 from the corpus appear below.

(8) *So, this is what happened, but this is  $\emptyset$  church and it's an apostolic church and when we dealt with Gumbura's case.* (Public dialogue 14)

(9) *More than half of its land is  $\emptyset$  desert and the climate and lack of water resources are naturally not in favour of agriculture.* (Editorials 8)

#### 5.4.5. The use of the definite article in ZE where StE favours the use of the zero article: Feature 64

In the ZE corpus, feature 64 occurred 0.12% of the time, whilst the definite article was used in a standard way 99.88% of the time. The fact that feature 64 is attested in three spoken genres namely private dialogues, public dialogues, and public scripted monologues means that the feature does not meet the classification guideline about being attested in both spoken and written registers (cf. Van Rooy & Kruger 2016). The occurrences of feature 64 could be regarded as errors and the feature was assigned to category D. Since ZE and WZE are contact varieties, it is interesting to note that this feature falls in the same category (Fitzmaurice 2020). This feature was also classified into category D in Ugandan English (Ssempuuma 2020) and in Ghanaian English (Huber 2020). Example sentences of feature 64 from the corpus are shown below.

- (10) *If if you can have those facilities more than WhatsApp. We can have the the Facebook, eh Twitter, Myspace and the like. (Private dialogue 5)*
- (11) *Like, after that, the government seek help from, donations from the citizens. And the citizens donated. Some were send to the uh to help those who were, who survived from the the the Idai (cyclone). (Private semi-scripted dialogue 3)*

#### *5.4.6 The use of the indefinite article in ZE where StE favours the use of the zero article: Feature 65*

Data analysis showed that feature 65 was attested 21 times in both spoken and written registers and in seven genres, representing widespread use. Cross-tabulation showed that the percentage of occurrence of feature 65 was low (0.34%). The indefinite article was used 99.66% of the time in the ZE corpus. Therefore, feature 65 belongs to category C. Example sentences from the corpus are given below.

- (12) *But eh o what Mr Katsinha was saying about the salary increment it remains a hearsay until he proves it because he he's he's purporting to have stolen documents and now he can't even prove anything. (Public dialogue 25)*
- (13) *I can say there was a massive destruction mostly in Manicaland south. (Private semi-scripted dialogue 28)*
- (14) *We would like to thank you for doing a great work at our school. (Private business letter 1)*

By contrast, the use of an indefinite article in ZE where StE favours the use of the zero article was placed in category D in WZE (Fitzmaurice 2020). A comparison of ZE with other L2 varieties shows that this feature falls in the same category (C) in ZE and in Kenyan English (Buregeya 2020).

#### 5.4.7 The use of the indefinite article *one/wan*: Feature 66

Feature 66 appeared five times in two spoken genres namely private semi-scripted dialogues and three times in public dialogues. The use of the indefinite article *one* in the corpus is illustrated below.

- (15) *Uh but having said that, as a society which is all these farms that were around, we had several common problems. Uh one major one being uhm thieves.* (Private semi-scripted dialogue 40)
- (16) *Interestingly this is one team that many people regarded as minors.* (Public dialogue 15)

The percentage of use of feature 66 was 0.74% and *one* was used in a standard manner 99.26% of the time. The low percentage of occurrence and small number of genres warrant the examples to be regarded as errors in line with Van Rooy and Kruger's (2016) recommendation that if a feature's frequency is negligible, it cannot be regarded as an innovation. Feature 66 is assigned to category D (attested absence of the feature). In contrast, Fitzmaurice (2020) indicated that feature 66 exists but is extremely rare in WZE (category C). The indefinite article *one* was reported to be absent in Cape Flats English, Ugandan English, and Nigerian English in Kortmann et al.'s (2020) taxonomy.

#### 5.4.8 The use of demonstratives instead of the definite article: Feature 67

Feature 67 was used a total of 90 times, occurring 53 times in private semi-scripted dialogues, 26 times in private dialogues, once in creative writing, five times in newspaper reportage, three times in social letters, once in private business letters, and once in business letters. Cross-tabulation showed that feature 67 occurred 5.63% of the time, whilst the percentage of occurrences of *that* as a demonstrative is 94.37%. Based on a high percentage of occurrence, where the demonstrative is used in spoken and written registers, and used across seven different genres, feature 67 is neither pervasive nor

extremely rare (category B). The evidence of widespread use of this feature by ZE speakers is thus apparent (cf. Bamgbose 1998; Kruger & Van Rooy 2017). Below are examples of feature 67 from the corpus.

- (17) *The falling of that water into the gorge.* (Private semi-scripted dialogue 14)
- (18) *They will tell you the past was better even if, in the middle of the worst drought since 1981, they haven't tasted that dreaded fetid mealie-meal we used to call "kenya" in 1992.* (Newspaper reportage 12)
- (19) *I have seen your email. Please send that book to the address below [...] I'm yet to find a room to lodge in Gweru.* (Social letters 2)

According to (Fitzmaurice 2020), feature 67 is in category C in WZE. This feature falls in the same category (B) in ZE as in BSAE (Mesthrie 2020).

## 6. Discussion

For the first research question on the frequency of articles, results reveal that the ICE-GB had higher frequencies of *a/an* than the ZE corpus and the zero article was used more frequently in the ZE corpus than in the ICE-GB. This can be credited to article deletion, insertion and substitution. The fact that features 62, 63, 65, and 67 exist in different categories in ZE confirms previous findings, which noted that article insertion, substitution and deletion occur in some AE varieties (e.g. Gough 1996; Greenbaum & Mbali 2002; Mesthrie & Bhatt 2008; Minow 2010; Botha 2013). In addition, variations between the two corpora may be attributed to language contact between English and Shona in Zimbabwe (cf. Kachru 1992; Schneider 2003, 2007; Kadenge 2010). According to Schneider (2003, 2007), language contact may lead to linguistic transfer on a structural and phonological level, resulting in innovation features manifesting in the English of indigenous people. Since previous research has highlighted the influence of the substrate rules of African languages on L2 varieties of English (e.g. Mesthrie 2006; Makalela 2013; Marungudzi 2016), further research is warranted to determine if there is cross-linguistic influence in the use of articles in ZE. No differences were observed in the frequencies of the definite article in the two corpora, meaning that ZE follows L1 English conventions in the use of the definite article. This lack of differences can be explained by the fact that in Zimbabwean schools, L1 conventions, specifically for BrE which was introduced through colonialism, provide the norm for language use in the field of teaching and learning as

well as in print media (Marungudzi 2016).

A comparative analysis of the frequency of the definite and indefinite articles in different genres was done to answer research question 1 and revealed variations in some genres. The ZE corpus had higher occurrences of *the* in private dialogues and creative writing and higher frequencies of *a/an* in private dialogues compared to the ICE-GB. In contrast, *the* was used more frequently in the ICE-GB in five genres, namely, in business letters, public scripted monologues, editorials, popular writing, and newspaper reportage. *A/an* occurred more often in the ICE-GB in six genres namely in public scripted monologues, public dialogues, editorials, newspaper reportage, social letters, and business letters. This finding supports Sand's (2004) observation that article usage is influenced by text type. Similarities were observed in the frequency of *the* and *a/an* in three genres each in the two corpora, revealing that there are no unique article usage patterns in ZE in these genres.

Research question 2 focused on whether there is innovation in ZE. Results obtained from the analysis of the ZE corpus are intriguing because they show that there is innovation regarding feature 67, the use of demonstratives instead of the definite article. This feature was neither pervasive nor extremely rare and therefore classified as category B. The use of the zero article in ZE where StE uses the definite article (feature 62), the use of the zero article in ZE where StE uses the indefinite article (feature 63), and use of the indefinite article in ZE where StE favours the use of the zero article (feature 65) belonged to category C. It can be concluded that the abovementioned features seem to be emerging and have not yet been established in ZE. The fact that there is an attested absence of features 60, 61, 64, and 66 is evidence that ZE follows L1 English norms regarding these features.

With reference to research question 3 concerning the stage of the DM that ZE falls in, two consecutive stages of development are apparent in this study. The first stage is the exonormative stabilisation stage where there is an emergence of innovation features (Schneider 2003, 2007). The DM posits that at stage 2, differences between indigenous and standard strands of English emerge. Schneider (2007) proposed that four parameters namely sociopolitical background, identity constructions, sociolinguistic conditions, and linguistic effects are evident at each stage of the DM. In the case of ZE, it can be argued that the variety has passed through stage 1, the foundation stage of the

DM because the sociopolitical background of Zimbabwe is characterised by the introduction of English through British colonialism in 1890. Identities were then constructed, with the indigenous (IDG) and the settler (STL) strands operating independently of each other. Regarding the sociolinguistic conditions, due to the need for communication between indigenous people and settlers, there was language contact between English and indigenous languages, which include Shona. The linguistic consequences of this language contact include the borrowing of Shona terms as well as the direct lexical transfer of Shona terms into English (cf. Kadenge 2012). With respect to the exonormative stabilisation (stage 2), the sociopolitical background of Zimbabwe is characterised by the formal recognition of English as an official language and the use of English in education, trade, and government sectors (cf. Kadenge 2009). The STL group's identity constructions shifted from being exclusively British to encompassing local experiences of the colonised country, Zimbabwe. The IDG group's knowledge of English enhanced their sociopolitical status and enabled access to better-paying jobs. Bilingualism is another sociolinguistic characteristic associated with stage 2 of the DM. Regarding ZE, the use of Shona and English has become widespread, with English being acquired mostly at school. The linguistic effects of such bilingual language contact include lexico-grammatical and structural changes, as was apparent in the current study where observations were made about some features that were attested with limited frequency. These features (62, 63 and 65) existed but were extremely rare (level C). Therefore, there is evidence of the start of the nativisation and innovation processes in ZE, a characteristic of stage 2 of the DM.

The second stage of development is the nativisation stage. The sociolinguistic background of ZE at stage 3, the nativisation stage of the DM, is marked by independence from Britain in 1980. Regarding the identity construction parameter, the gap between the British settlers and the indigenous people was substantially reduced leading to the STL and IDG strands becoming closely interwoven. At this stage, there was increased interaction between the locals and the settlers, meaning that languages were in contact more often than before (Schneider 2003). The DM posits that at stage 3, there is transformation, both culturally and linguistically. Due to an increase in cross-cultural communication, language change occurs. The linguistic effects of this change include innovation, heavy lexical borrowing, and nativisation. This change is reflected in ZE because there is evidence of innovation and nativisation in the ZE corpus. The use

of demonstratives instead of the definite article was assigned to category B since there is a change at the lexico-grammatical level in ZE as reflected by the frequency and usage patterns of feature 67, a characteristic of stage 3 of the DM. These findings correspond with Marungudzi's (2016) observation that ZE is at both stage 2 and 3 of the DM.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper set out to compare the frequency of articles in the ZE corpus and the ICE-GB and to determine whether there are variations between the two corpora. In addition, the study explored if there is innovation in the use of articles in ZE and to determine the stage of the DM in which ZE falls. Data analysis showed that the normalised frequency of the indefinite article in the ICE-GB was higher compared to the ZE corpus and no statistically significant differences were observed for the usage of the definite article in the two corpora. Regarding the use of the zero article, the ZE corpus recorded a higher frequency of occurrence than the ICE-GB. No variations were recorded in the total frequencies of *the*, *a/an* and the zero article between the two corpora. The frequency of occurrence of the definite article in the spoken register was higher in the ZE corpus whilst in the written register, *the* recorded a higher frequency in the ICE-GB. The variations observed for the indefinite article are statistically significant because the normalised frequencies were higher in both the spoken and written registers in the ICE-GB compared to the ZE corpus. Data analysis of the different genres showed that private dialogues and creative writing had higher normalised frequencies in the ZE corpus. A different pattern emerged from the analysis of business letters, public scripted monologues, newspaper reportage, popular writing, and editorials in the ICE-GB with a higher frequency of occurrence of *the* in comparison to the ZE corpus. Regarding *a/an*, private dialogues showed a higher normalised frequency in the ZE corpus. In the ICE-GB, significant variations were recorded in the use of the indefinite article in public scripted monologues, public dialogues, editorials, social letters, business letters, and newspaper reportage. The use of different morphosyntactic features for articles analysed in this study was assigned to different categories as shown in table 7.

**Table 7:** Summary of the different features of articles and their categorisations in ZE

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Category of feature in ZE</b>
60: The use of the definite article where StE uses the indefinite article.	(D) Attested absence of feature
61: The use of the indefinite article where StE uses the definite article.	(D) Attested absence of feature
62: The use of the zero article where StE uses the definite article.	(C) Feature exists, but is extremely rare
63: The use of the zero article where StE uses the indefinite article.	(C) Feature exists, but is extremely rare
64: The use of the definite article where StE favours the use of the zero article.	(D) Attested absence of feature.
65: The use of the indefinite article where StE favours the use of the zero article.	(C) Feature exists, but is extremely rare
66: The use of the indefinite article <i>one/wan</i> .	(D) Attested absence of feature
67: The use of demonstratives in the place of the definite article.	(B) Feature is neither pervasive nor extremely rare.

Results showed an attested absence of features 60, 61, 64, and 66. The examples were either too few or occurred in a few genres and in only one register, warranting the examples to be considered errors. Therefore, ZE follows L1 English conventions in the use of articles regarding these features. Features 62, 63 and 65 were assigned to category C because the features met some of the classification guidelines. This shows that ZE speakers seem to deviate slightly from L1 English conventions which can indicate that new norms may still be in the process of being formed. Feature 67 is an innovation in ZE and met most of the classification criteria to be assigned to category B. It was noted that ZE shares several features with WZE and with other L2 varieties of AE such as BSAE, Nigerian English, Kenyan English, Ghanaian English, Ugandan English, and Cape Flats English. Results from this study have shown that ZE is at both the exonormative stabilisation stage (thus stage 2) and the nativisation stage (thus stage 3) of the DM. Whether ZE moves on to another stage or fossilises will depend on factors such as different attitudes towards ZE and the acceptance of the variety, suggesting that future research needs to be done regarding ZE. Currently, there are no grammar books, dictionaries, and user guides for ZE. In schools, L1 conventions (based on BrE) are the norm in teaching and learning (Marungudzi 2016). This article has contributed to the study of ZE through the creation of a corpus of ZE, which can be used as a linguistic resource in future studies. Furthermore, real-life communication samples can be utilised

for speech-to-text and text-to-speech technology. By exploring articles, the study has added to the empirical data for a better understanding of ZE.

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