
Undeletions in Black South African English¹

Rajend Mesthrie

Linguistics Section, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Cape Town,
Private Bag, Rondebosch, 7701. E-mail: rajend.mesthrie@uct.ac.za

1. Introduction

In this paper, I propose some syntactic tendencies by which New Englishes can be better characterised from an internal and a comparative perspective, using Black South African English (BSAE) as a case study and focal point. Many descriptions of New Englishes have simply taken the form of lists of features. "Feature" in New English Studies (as in traditional dialectology) refers to a linguistic item that is characteristic of a particular second language (L2) variety, but not of the relevant superstrate, which is usually standard first language (L1) English of Britain or the USA. Sometimes a feature is characterised not in terms of pure absence versus presence, but in terms of relative frequency, markedness, or a change of function. Such inventories of features are a useful, and perhaps necessary, first step in dialect description. However, they are a long way off from being descriptively adequate, if one may apply Chomsky's (1986) term in an L2 context. For that, one would need to study an individual feature as exhaustively as possible in terms of its function and sociolinguistic distribution in the dialect concerned.

Since the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, BSAE has emerged from the shadows into the public arena, via the public broadcast media and high profile job opportunities in government and the private sectors. The period immediately following the transition can be characterised as one that engendered a "moral panic" (see Cameron 1995:82-97), evident in the claims about the desecration of English and loss of standards that found its

expression in Letters to the Editor of many newspapers. Nowadays, opposition to the use of Black English in the media is more muted. L2 English accents are becoming more acceptable if one is to judge from the range of callers attracted to phone-in programmes, for instance. But a "complaint tradition" is still in existence in, for example, letters from L1 English speakers to the national radio service, SAFM.²

Black English is becoming, in Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) terms, more "diffuse" than in the apartheid era, with the emergence of several new strands, reflecting a diversity of linguistic experiences amongst its speakers. Among these strands are the following:

- (i) the English of people returning from exile in different parts of the world;
- (ii) the rise of a new elite whose children share the L1 English norms of their peers in the now non-racial but English-dominant private schools; and
- (iii) the general increase of Black children at schools outside the townships.

All of these factors suggest that BSAE is likely to develop the range of accent and grammatical types that scholars have characterised as *cultivated – general – broad* (see Mitchell and Delbridge (1965) for Australia; Lass (2002) for South Africa). The rise of BSAE in the public sphere has been matched by an increase in academic studies since the 1990s. Its socio-educational context is considered by Buthelezi (1995), Wright (1996), and De Klerk and Gough (2002); its phonetics by Van Rooy and Van Huyssteen (2000), and Wissing (2002); and its syntax by Gough (1996), Mesthrie (1997), De Klerk (2003), etc. Gough (1996:61-63) provided a list of 23 of the main features of BSAE, which is useful as a quick overview of the variety. The list is repeated in De Klerk and Gough (2002:362-63).

In table 1 below, I list these features in the order provided by Gough, but for reasons of space provide just one of his examples of each feature:

Table 1. The main morphosyntactic features of BSAE (adapted from Gough 1996:61-63).

Morphosyntactic feature of BSAE	Example
The use of non-count as count nouns	<i>You must put more efforts into your work</i>
Omission of articles	<i>He was Φ good man</i>
Extensive use of resumptive pronouns	<i>My standard 9, I have enjoyed it very much</i>
Gender conflation in pronouns	<i>She came to see me yesterday - male referent</i>
Noun phrases not always marked for number	<i>We did all our subject in English</i>
Extension of the progressive	<i>Even racism is still existing</i>
Absence of 3 rd sg. Ending	<i>The survival of a person depend on education</i>
Idiosyncratic patterns of complementation	<i>That thing made me to know God</i>
Simplification of tense	<i>I wish that people in the world will get educated</i>
Past tense not always marked	<i>In 1980 the boycott starts</i>
New prepositional verb forms	<i>He explained about the situation</i>
Structures of comparison	<i>She was beautiful than all other women</i>
Use of <i>too</i> and <i>very much</i> as intensifiers	<i>She is too beautiful - i.e. 'very much'</i>
Use of <i>in order that</i> in purpose clauses	<i>He went there in order that he sees her</i>
Generalisation of participle <i>being</i>	<i>He left being thirsty - i.e. 'in a thirsty state'</i>
New pronoun forms	<i>She was very unhappy of which it was clear to see</i>
Question order retained in indirect questions	<i>I asked him why did he go</i>
Use of subordinators	<i>Although she loved him but she didn't marry him</i>
Invariant <i>né</i> in tag questions	<i>You start again by pushing this button, né?</i>
New quantifier forms	<i>Others were drinking, others were eating</i>
<i>The most thing</i> for 'the thing I [verb] the most'	<i>The most thing I like is apples</i>
<i>X's first time</i> for 'the first time that X...'	<i>This is my first time to go on a journey</i>

Can be able to as modal verb phrase

I can be able to go

From table 1, it is fairly clear that BSAE shares a number of features with L2 English in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, e.g., the use of *can be able* for *can*, and a predilection for left dislocation — see Bokamba (1982:83) for sub-Saharan Africa, Schmied (1991:72-73) for East Africa, and Mesthrie (1997) for South Africa. Such widespread similarities raise interesting questions regarding the role of a broad "living" Bantu substrate, complementary to, and integrated with, other language processes involved in L2 learning and stabilisation. The study that follows is therefore of considerable relevance to the study of English in sub-Saharan Africa in general.

Data for this paper comes from an ongoing project on BSAE initiated in 1992. The data base currently comprises 60 interviews undertaken under "Labovian" conditions, adapted as necessary for an L2 context. The interviews give evidence of a range of lects, from speakers fossilised at an early interlanguage stage to the highly proficient, virtually L1 variety of some university students. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to focus on a specific subgroup of 12 speakers who may be characterised as (mid-)mesolectal. These 12 speakers have the following characteristics:

- (i) they are all fluent in English;
- (ii) they function in English as their main academic language;
- (iii) they did not learn English as an L1;
- (iv) they did not use English in the home as children;
- (v) they are highly multilingual, often speaking about five other languages;
- (vi) they have a Southern Bantu language as home language: either an Nguni language like Xhosa (3) or Zulu (1), or a Sotho language like Tswana (4), South Sotho (1), or Pedi (3);
- (vii) they were interviewed while studying at an English-medium university; and
- (viii) they use English as a means of interaction with Black peers, but not exclusively.³

However, these students can be differentiated from acrolectal BSAE speakers, in terms of accent and grammar. Typically, acrolectal speakers have been to multiracial or private schools from an early age, resulting in the acquisition of L2 norms that are quite similar to that of "cultivated" White South African English.⁴ Studying the mesolect gives us the best clues about BSAE as a system, as it is not characterised by the lack of fluency one often finds with

basilang speakers; it is not a direct "inheritance" of the target language (TL); nor is it yet swamped by "interference" from the standard. See Rickford (1974) for the insights provided by the mesolect for Creole studies, and for the Guyanese Creole continuum in particular.

2. The notion of an 'antideletion'

I claim that – far from being a problematic and error-ridden dialect with a miscellany of non-standardisms – from the upper mesolect and beyond, BSAE can be seen as a coherent system, whose differences from what have come to be the standard systems of English can be characterised from the vantage point of deletion processes that are commonly assumed in generative analyses of English, or are reported in the dialectological literature. For want of a better word, I coin the term "antideletion" for this phenomenon, which can be refined into the following three types:

- (i) Type A (Undeletion Proper): This type restores an element that is often assumed to be deleted or to have an empty node in generative analyses of English.
- (ii) Type B (Non-deletion): This type shows the presence of a feature of standard English that is deleted in some (L1) dialects of English.
- (iii) Type C (Insertion, the opposite of deletion): This type inserts elements that are not found in the underlying structure of standard English.

In section 4, I present seven proper undeletions of type A, whilst types B and C are discussed in Mesthrie (2006). The syntactic framework I use is an eclectic "descriptive syntax" one, which draws on insights from Chomskyan and other branches of linguistics (e.g., typology), without committing itself to a particular version of a particular theory. This approach is best exemplified by the landmark 1842-page *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002), which presents findings based on over 50 years of syntactic theory relating to English in ways that are accessible outside the generative paradigm (e.g., to applied linguists). Like Huddleston and Pullum, I find the notion of 'underlying structure' to be a useful one for descriptive purposes.

3. An introductory comparison with other varieties of South African English

Ultimately, this paper is concerned with characterising BSAE in its own terms. However, in order to establish that the features outlined in section 4 are indeed features of this variety and not, say, general colloquialisms that appear in L1 English varieties, initial comparisons with relevant TLs are necessary. One obvious TL is White South African English (henceforth, WSAE), an offshoot of southern British English introduced into the country in 1820 (see Lass 2002:104-108). Formal WSAE is relevant as a variety aimed at, if not frequently achieved, in the classroom. It is the language of textbooks and the upper echelons of the education system.

Colloquial WSAE, on the other hand, is also a source of input in the workplace and socially. However, social contacts between Black and White South Africans were still limited in the early to mid-1990s when the data was collected. Descriptions of colloquial WSAE syntax can be found in Branford (1991), Lass (2002), and Bowerman (2004). Other varieties of South African English which themselves started out as L2 varieties are also relevant, e.g., Afrikaans English (Watermeyer 1993), Cape Flats English (Malan 1996), and South African Indian English (Mesthrie 1992). No corpus of South African English is yet available that will allow the use of these varieties as control groups to verify that the properties of BSAE described in this paper are indeed found to a statistically significant degree in this variety alone. However, the descriptions that are available in the sources cited are sufficient insofar as they are either interview-based descriptions of individual varieties (Mesthrie 1992; Watermeyer 1993) or careful summaries of a range of studies (Malan 1996; Bowerman 2004). None of these studies point to a tendency to deletion in the varieties described.

For example, Branford (1991:223-224) devotes the equivalent of a whole page of her *Dictionary of South African English* to an entry called "Omissions". Apart from an entry on "articles", it is the only such general grammatical entry in the work. She lists ten such omissions covering a variety of categories, as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Deletions in White South African English (adapted from Branford 1991:223-224).

- t/d past tense suffixes*
- Contracted 2nd person present copula `re*
- Articles and other determiners*
- Pronouns in object position*
- Nouns after certain adjectives – e.g. Christmas for Christmas present*
- Prepositions after verbs like explained*
- Prepositions or conjunctions like of, as, if*
- Possessive `s*
- 3rd person singular verb ending –s*
- Participle omission with verbs of motion*

Apart from the last feature, which is explicitly labelled "Afr[ican] usage", the list covers essentially the informal usage of L1 WSAE and L2 "Afrikaans English". Without going into

details, for reasons of space, we may say that the non-standard features of WSAE, the main historical input into BSAE, tend to be omissions. This paper attempts to establish that, by contrast, BSAE displays the opposite tendency. In section 5, I focus on BSAE constructions that vary from the composite TL (formal classroom English and other varieties of South African English). I use formal standard English (henceforth, *std Eng*) as a metalanguage to render the examples from my data base into an internationally recognisable form, where necessary. Many of the example sentences will not need such "translation". It is emphasised that the use of *std Eng* is thus for convenience and is not intended to imply that it is the most appropriate variety with which to compare informal mesolectal BSAE. Where comparable figures exist for other varieties of colloquial South African English, they will be included in individual sub-sections.

4. Undeletions proper

In this section, I present seven instances of undeletion in BSAE, namely that of the complementiser *that*, infinitival marker *to*, pronoun (including resumptive pronouns, left dislocation, and dummy *it*), *to be* in small clauses, and the occasional undeletions with idiomatic *wh*- constructions.

4.1 Complementiser *that*

The constraints on the use, variability, and deletion of *that* in *std Eng* are reasonably clear. It is variable in unmarked complements with verbs like *say* as in (1) and (2); mandatory in extraposition as in (3); and categorically deleted in direct speech as in (4) and (5):

- (1) She said that she'd go for a walk.
- (2) She said she'd go for a walk.
- (3) That she'd go for a walk was clear to us all. (* Φ for *that*)
- (4) She said, "I'll go for a walk". (**that* for Φ)
- (5) She thought, "He's not a bad chap". (**that* for Φ)

In *std Eng*, the difference between direct and indirect speech is signalled by deictic changes to pronouns and tense markers within the quoted clause, as can be seen by comparing examples (2) and (4) above. BSAE accords largely with the *std Eng* system, but allows *that* in a wider

number of cases. In particular, *that* is (variably) permitted before direct quotations, as shown in (6) to (8):

- (6) So she was warning us **that**, "You'd better learn this language because, like, you're going to Cape Town".
- (7) They'll just tell you **that**, "We have been using Fanakalo".
- (8) They announced **that**, "We are going to do all courses in Afrikaans".

The quotative nature of the subordinate clauses is also signalled by falling intonation accompanying *that*. The use of *that* in sentences like (6) to (8) is not mandatory, and co-occurs with the standard use of zero with quotative verbs, as illustrated in (9) – (10).

- (9) A lot of people will usually say, "What does it mean?"
- (10) When I'm introducing him to my parents, I'll say, "Okay baba or mama, this is my friend, So-and-So".

In BSAE, there is a noticeable use of *no* and, less commonly, *oh* after *that*. These exclamations act as introducers of some direct quotes. Although not part of std Eng, these are apparently common in colloquial L1 English too (Anthea Fraser Gupta, personal communication 2005).

- (11) I just said **that**, "No, I cannot do what everyone is doing".
- (12) You can hear **that**, "No, they are using a different language now".
- (13) They want to show us **that**, no, they can speak English.
- (14) We just saw **that** "Oh, we are at home now".

In (11) and (12), *no* is a discourse marker, equivalent to something like *in fact*. Sentence (13), whose subordinate clause is **not** expressed in direct speech, shows this discourse marking function clearly. This counts as "semi-indirect" style. These instances of *no* and *oh* do not alter the analysis of direct speech; they are noted here simply because they appear fairly frequently. Anthea Fraser Gupta (personal communication 2005) points out that these are also not uncommon in L1 varieties of English. Table 3 gives the statistics of the use of *that* in direct speech amongst the 12 mesolectal speakers studied. "Deleted *that*" refers to the absence

of *that* before quotations, as per the TL. "Undeleted *that*" refers to examples like (6) to (8), and (11), (12), and (14).

Table 3. Complementiser *that* in direct speech amongst 12 BSAE speakers.

Speaker	Deleted <i>that</i>	Undeleted <i>that</i>	Total direct speech	Percentage undeleted
1	3	4	7	57.1%
2	28	2	30	6.66%
3	16	7	23	30.4%
4	3	1	4	25%
5	22	1	23	4.3%
6	3	1	4	25%
7	13	4	17	23.5%
8	5	2	7	28.5%
9	1	3	4	75%
10	2	0	2	0%
11	54	2	56	3.6%
12	18	5	23	21.7%
Total	168	32	200	16%

There were no zero equivalents of *that* in BSAE where the full form is mandatory in the TL. However, since actual instances of compulsory *that*, as with extraposition in sentence (3), are absent in my data base, this issue is to be followed up in future work involving, inter alia, an experimental test.⁵

The percentage of undeleted *that* is a high 16% of 200. Whilst it could *prima facie* be argued to be a simple L2 error (incomplete learning of a TL rule), other facts stressed in the rest of this paper suggest that we are dealing with a pattern of undeletions. Mesolectal BSAE could then be argued to involve two competing tendencies. The first is that of the TL taught at schools and universities; the second is a general "undeleting" tendency, which may derive from three possible sources. The main force is probably that of substrate influence. The second force is that of analogy or overgeneralisation in L2 acquisition, as speakers conflate direct and indirect speech, albeit recessively in the mesolect. A third force comes from discourse tendencies within L1 English which allow *that* for purposes of clarification and so

forth. In fact, sentences with the presence of *that*, such as (13) above, are given in grammars like that of, for example, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985).

I now turn to other instances of undeleted *that*. In (15) below, *that* makes an appearance in clefted *wh*- constructions, contrary to TL norms. The equivalent in std Eng to (15) has Φ in place of *that* as in (16). Note that (17), the unclefted equivalent of (16) in the TL, allows *that* or zero. Likewise, (18) from BSAE shows *wh* + *that*, this time in a combination of indirect marker *when* + complementiser *that*. However, the std Eng equivalent, given as (19), disallows *that* after *when*.

- (15) So **what** I think **that** should be done... is to ask students... like "Up to this far, how do you feel?"
- (16) So what I think Φ should be done is to ask students "Up to now, how do you feel?"
- (17) I think (**that**) what should be done is to ask students "Up to now, how do you feel?"
- (18) ... but when I came here is **when that** I realised that there's something wrong ...
- (19) The time I came here is **when Φ** I realised that there was something wrong.

A related appearance of *that* in BSAE is in adjunct clauses of comparison (see Huddleston and Pullum 2002:1146), where std Eng disallows it, as in (20). In this sentence, *that* is not an *ad hoc* interpolation determined by *maybe*; it is a regular pattern that turns up in formal styles. Sentence (21) is taken from a postgraduate student's essay, while (22) is from a radio interview. The structure of the standard equivalent of (22) can be represented as in (23).

- (20) As you might have heard, maybe, **that** women were quite restricted.
- (21) As it is mentioned above **that** one of the speakers said that she sometimes gets tired of speaking in English ...
- (22) As you know **that** they are from the Ciskei. (*that* for Φ)
- (23) [As you know ----,] they are from the Ciskei.

Since these are formal sentences that rarely occur in informal sociolinguistic interviews, I do not quantify them. It is again possible that examples (20) to (22) show the effects of analogy or overgeneralisation on language learning: Speakers appear to conflate two different constructions, *As you know Φ , X* and *You know that X*. This "error analysis" is only relevant at

the diachronic level, in analysing how an interlanguage develops via certain speaker strategies. The origin of a construction (whether it is from substrata, overgeneralisation of a contemporary TL rule, dialect input, etc.) is an interesting problem in itself. However, the real significance of new L2 structures lies in their contribution to a "pool of variants" at a particular stage of pre-acquisition before the new variety stabilises (see Mufwene 2001; Siegel 2001). At the next stage of selection, such competing forms are narrowed down according to certain typological principles, if the TL is not readily available. Mufwene (2001) argues that such influences are driven by the language ecology of the variety being established. If the pull of the TL is strong (e.g., it is readily available in the classroom and outside), then selection turns out to be largely a matter of "weeding out" the non-TL forms from the pool of variants. I propose that mesolectal BSAE shows the interplay of several phenomena, namely:

- (i) substrate influence from the Nguni and Sotho languages, which I explore more fully in work in progress;
- (ii) discourse effects in common with colloquial English;
- (iii) typological regularisation of the pool of variants; and
- (iv) the pull of TL grammar as the influence of education becomes more forceful in the experience of present-day mesolectal speakers.⁶

4.2 Infinitival marker *to*

A fairly similar type of analysis holds for infinitival *to*, which is mandatory after most verbs that select infinitive clauses as complements, as in (24). On the other hand, there is a small set of "bare infinitivals" (*let, make, have*) which behave in the opposite fashion, as shown in (25) to (27).

(24) He asked me **to** go. (* Φ)

(25) He made me Φ go. (**to*).

(26) He let me Φ go. (**to*)

(27) He had me Φ help with the errands. (**to*)⁷

BSAE noticeably allows *to* to be retained in a number of sentences belonging to this set:

(28) My friends asked, "Why do you let your child **to** speak Zulu?"

- (29) Then I told them that I wasn't tribal, that's why I let him **to** speak Zulu.
 (30) Exclusions is not a Black issue as Bremner has successfully made it **to** appear to be.⁸
 (31) And even the teachers at school made us **to** hate the course.

However, Φ rather than *to* is mandatory in BSAE mesolect in the first person forms *let me go* and *let's go*. There is a third set exemplified by *help*, which allows *to* or Φ in std Eng, as shown in (32). This variability is also found in my data base, as exemplified by sentences (33) and (34).

- (32) She helped me (**to**) find my rabbit.
 (33) I think it would help me Φ write better.
 (34) I had to leave it with somebody to help me **to** come to UCT.

Sentence (35) shows that negative sentences also permit undeletion.

- (35) So that's what makes one not **to** know which language to speak.

As far as std Eng is concerned, such use of *to* in negative constructions would, in my judgement, be less marked than in positive sentences. Once again, standard zero forms instead of undeleted *to* also occur in BSAE, as in (36) and (37).

- (36) You must let your child Φ speak English.
 (37) My dad used to make me Φ read the newspapers.

The undeletion of *to* is noticeable with the form *to be*, as shown in (38) and (39).

- (38) Treat that person as a person and maybe pointing out things that can make that person **to be** the character that he is ...
 (39) ... and it challenges me or it makes me **to be** challenged ...⁹

Std Eng here allows either Φ or *be* but not **to be*. Other sites for this phenomena include verbs of sensory perception (Std Eng: *I heard her cry; I saw him leave; I felt it crawl*). Unfortunately, no such examples occurred in my data base; and my impression that the more

idiomatic BSAE equivalents involve participial forms like *I heard her crying*, *I saw him leaving*, and *I felt it crawling* is to be followed up in future work. There is at least one instance of the substitution of infinitival V + *-ing* of the TL by *to* + V with an admittedly non-sensory verb in my data base: *We didn't even mind to watch at night*.

Table 4 gives the statistics for the occurrence of *to* versus zero. Excluded from the count are first person subjunctive expressions *let me/us V*, which occurs invariantly in the mesolect. Thus, for the purposes of this analysis, phrases like *let me go*, *let's say*, and *let me say* can be considered idiomatic invariant forms, rather than ones involved in syntactic/parametric variation.

Table 4. The use of Φ versus infinitival *to* with three verbs in BSAE.¹⁰

Sp	m	le	h	m	le	h	Total	Percen
eake	ake	t	elp	ake	t	elp		tage
r		undele
	Φ	Φ	Φ	to	to	to		ted
2	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0
4	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	0
5	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	33.3%
6	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	100%
7	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
8	3	0	0	2	2	1	8	62.5%
9	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	100%
10	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
11	1	2	0	2	0	0	5	40%
12	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
To	8	1	1	4	3	3	29	34.5%
tal		0						

The percentage of undeletions in table 4 is a high 34.5%. Most of these show the non-standard undeletion of an infinitive. Only a few tokens with *help* are variable in both BSAE and the TL.

4.3 Pronoun effects

Rather similar to the behaviour of *that* and *to* discussed above are undeletions involving pronouns. The most obvious of these is the use of resumptive pronouns, though other retentions are also prominent.

4.3.1 Resumptive pronouns

This feature has been identified as a prominent feature of BSAE; Gough (1996:61), for example, uses the heading *Extensive use of resumptive pronouns*. The following are examples from my mesolectal corpus.

- (40) Because my people are having their ideas which they ... didn't create **that** by themselves.
- (41) Students discovered that the kind of education that these people are trying to give **it** to us, they wanted us to do most of the courses in standard grade ...
- (42) ... there's these things which you call **it** *isifanekisazwi* [=ideophones] in Xhosa ...

Sentences (40) to (42) show the retention of a resumptive (or shadow) pronoun in the relative clause. However, such examples are infrequent and probably subject to a strong grammatical constraint. That is, resumptive pronouns do not occur as subjects within the relative clause; the relevant statistic in my data is 67 zero subject relatives versus 0 resumptive subject pronouns. This is also true of the data provided by Bokamba (1982:83) and Gough (1996:61). The absence of resumptive pronouns in subject relatives may well be a sub-Saharan L2 English "universal". In oblique position (usually direct object and genitive), resumptive pronouns are an option, as table 5 shows.

Table 5. Proportion of oblique resumptive pronouns in relative clauses.

	n	%
Oblique resumptive pronouns	6	17.6
Occurrences of zero in oblique position	28	82.4
TOTAL	34	100

The constraint against resumptive pronouns in subject relative position requires explanation, as it goes against the general undeletion habit of BSAE. It is probably related to the frequency of subject copy pronouns in main clauses, to which I now turn.

4.3.2 Left dislocation

Resumptive pronouns are closely related to other forms like appositional pronouns occurring after a relative clause and pronouns in left dislocation constructions. Some writers on BSAE have erroneously, though perhaps understandably, referred to these appositional pronouns as "resumptive pronouns". Jespersen (1927:72) had noted that a relative clause could be "resumed later" by a personal or demonstrative pronoun, in long sentences in which the speaker has failed to keep track of the initial NP. The following examples are from my data base.

(43) The last time I was in Natal, **it** was in 1981.

(44) The people who are essentially born in Soweto, **they** can speak Tsotsi.

(45) Yes, most of them, I call **them** confused scholars.

These are left dislocations with complex NPs, including those with relative clauses as in (43) and (44). Left dislocation involves the use of an appositional (or copy) pronoun, which, unlike its resumptive counterpart, occurs in the main clause.¹¹ And, unlike their resumptive counterparts in BSAE, appositional pronouns may occupy subject position; in fact, they frequently do. Mesthrie (1997) undertook a sociolinguistic and functional survey of topicalisation phenomena among 50 BSAE speakers, concentrating on left dislocation, fronting, and focus movement. Consider the sentences in (46) to (48) in this regard.

(46) Oh, Haroun, **he** was the co-ordinator. Farouk, **that's** my economics teacher. [Left dislocation]

(47) *Q.*: Zulu?

A.: Yah, and Zulu I speak. [Fronting]

(48) *Q.*: And how long did you live in East London?

A.: For my life I'm there. [Focus movement]

According to Prince (1981), left dislocation, as in (46), involves a fronted NP with a copy pronoun in the main clause. Left dislocation is used to reintroduce information that has not been talked about for some time, or for contrastive purposes, when speakers go through lists and make comments about each individual element in the list. Fronting, on the other hand, puts old information first (in topic position). This topic must be already evoked in the

discourse or stand in a salient set relation to something already in the discourse (Prince 1981). Thus, *Zulu* in (47) has already been evoked in the question and is therefore fronted in the interviewee's response. In the focus movement construction in (48), *for [all] my life* stands in a salient set relation to the question *how long?* In contrast to fronting, focus movement puts new information first and involves a different intonational contour. According to Mesthrie's (1997:127-8) statistics, left dislocation is the most common of the three processes in BSAE, and BSAE makes a particularly high use of topicalisation processes (and especially left dislocation) compared to neighbouring dialects. Speakers in his data base (covering all lects) used thrice as many topicalisations as a control group of WSAE speakers. The statistics are 440 out of 8200 sentences (5.6%) in BSAE versus 15 out of 1080 sentences (1.8%) in the control group. At one level, many of the topicalisation phenomena in BSAE (especially fronting and focus movement) seem little different from general English usage. However, left dislocation does seem more characteristic of BSAE than of other English varieties. In particular, the frequency with which appositional pronouns are used after complex and interrupted NPs is probably significantly higher in BSAE. The figures for appositional pronouns after complex NPs for 12 speakers taken from different lects are given in table 6.

Table 6. Frequencies of left dislocation with complex NPs amongst 12 BSAE speakers (from Mesthrie 1997:134).

	n	%
Relative clauses with left dislocation	17/27	62.9
Partitive Genitives with left dislocation	32/62	52.5
Other complex NPs with left dislocation	13/25	52.0

As far as pragmatic functioning is concerned, BSAE generally does not seem to be innovative: It shares the same broad discourse functions that left dislocation serves in L1 usage. However, sometimes left dislocation does not seem to serve any pragmatic function in BSAE and may be triggered lexically by items like *because* and *people*, especially in "lower" sociolects.

From the undeletion perspective being developed in the present paper, it is noteworthy that left dislocation outweighs the other topicalisation phenomena: "Copying" is favoured over "chopping", if I may evoke Ross's (1986) now dated, but expressive, terms of early generative

syntax. The figures provided by Mesthrie (1997:127) for 44 speakers are as follows: Left dislocation 291; Fronting 121; and Focus movement 28.

4.3.3 Dummy *it*

Dummy or pleonastic *it* occurs in std Eng sentences like (49) and (50). In adjunct comparative clauses like (51), however, dummy *it* does not surface in std Eng.

(49) It's snowing.

(50) It can be said that children are highly adaptable.

(51) As Φ can be seen from recent statistics, the birth rate is declining.

BSAE mesolect notably favours the retention of *it* in constructions exemplified by (51). This construction belongs to a formal "expository" style and is not common in casual speech. Dummy *it* does surface regularly in BSAE university students' essays, as exemplified by (21) above and (52) below, which pertains to the main clause in a *for ... to* construction. However, examples can be found in speech too. Sentences (53) and (54) were taken from national radio, whilst (55) is from my data base.

(52) For her to use the word 'shame', **it** doesn't mean that there is no other word in Zulu.

(53) As I made **it** clear before, I am going to talk about solutions, not problems.

(54) As **it** is the case elsewhere in Africa, much can still be done for children. (std Eng: *As is the case ...*)

(55) Take **it** for example a person who's North Sotho ...

Potentially, BSAE restores dummy *it* in the whole range of expressions like *as is widely known*, *as happens frequently*, *as will be obvious*, etc.

4.4 *To be* in small clauses

In the syntax literature, the term "small clause" is used for structures exemplified by (56) (Radford 1988:324).

(56) I like my coffee black.

In Government and Binding terms, small clauses lack COMP and INFL, and have the canonical structure [NP XP]. For descriptive and comparative purposes, we can consider the underlying structure of (56) to be (57).

(57) I like [my coffee to be black].

In (57), *black* is part of an infinitival clause including the verb *be*. Though examples in my data base for this construction are sparse, I hypothesise that BSAE seems to prefer the latter, undeleted option, as in (58) and (59).

(58) But this higher primary and lower primary still have schools **being** strictly for Tswana-speaking pupils.

(59) But here now I find things are **being** tough ...¹²

In std Eng, (58) permits either a full relative (*schools that are strictly for Tswana-speaking pupils*) or deletion, turning the complement into a phrasal one (*schools strictly for Tswana-speaking pupils*). BSAE seems to treat (58) as a small clause, and fills it with a form of *be*. Similarly, (59) can be treated as including a small clause in std Eng (*[things __ tough]*) or as a full complement (*[things are tough]*). BSAE goes further in allowing the full complement (*[things are tough]*), as well as "double *be*" forms involving copula plus progressive, without a progressive sense being intended (*[things are being tough]*). There are at least 5 instances of such "double *be*" forms in my data base. Using my mesolectal data base, Moreira (2003:33-36) undertook a count of *to be* or *being* in BSAE quasi-small clauses. Her statistics are summarised in table 7:

Table 7. Use of forms of *be* in quasi-small clauses in BSAE

	n	%
Presence of <i>to be/ being</i>	23	57.5
Absence of <i>to be/ being</i>	17	42.5
Total	40	100.0

To complete the picture regarding small clauses, it is necessary to point to the occurrence of *to be* after *make*, described in 4.2. (Such instances were excluded from table 4.)

4.5 Occasional undeletions with idiomatic *wh*- constructions

Although empty or deleted elements of the TL turn up as lexical items in BSAE in the constructions I have surveyed so far, this does not apply to traces associated with *wh*-questions. That is, speakers do not produce sentences like *Who did you speak to him?*, with *him* coindexed with *who*. But there are a few sentences in the data base which give cause for thought, for example (60) and (61).

(60) Come what may **come**. (std Eng: *Come what may* ___)

(61) Whether you miss a meal or ... **do you eat it**, you have already paid. (= "Whether you miss a meal or eat it, you've already paid.")

Sentence (60) reworks an idiom of std Eng so that both the landing site and the trace positions of the extraposed verb *come* are lexicalised. Sentence (61), which retains the identical subject *you*, does so for emphatic purposes. It is a marked structure insofar as it involves "repair" signalled by the pause. However, it is noticeable that it involves the undeletion of dummy *do* after the initial *whether*. Although the example is not as clear as one would like (with its repair structure), the question can be raised whether *do* acts as a dummy replacement of *whether* (in *Whether you eat a meal or whether you miss it ...*). I take this structure to be different from the more usual undeletion of *do* in BSAE examples like *I don't know what did he say* (for std Eng *I don't know what he said*).

Given the properties discussed in this section, the following principle can be enunciated:

Principle 1

If a grammatical feature can be deleted in std Eng, it can be undeleted in BSAE mesolect.

However, since all the tables indicate that even in BSAE such undeletions are not mandatory, the following corollary is necessary:¹³

Corollary 1

If a grammatical feature can be deleted in std Eng, it can also be (variably) deleted in BSAE mesolect, at a lower rate of frequency.¹⁴

5. Related clusters of features in BSAE

In Mesthrie (2006), I examine two related clusters of features in BSAE mesolect. The first concerns a set of linguistic items which are not thought of as features, since they accord with the grammar of std Eng. However, they are well-known in the syntax literature, since some non-standard varieties do indeed delete them variably. I argue, therefore, that it is typologically significant that BSAE does not, for example, generally delete the copula, whereas varieties like African American Vernacular English (Labov 1972) and Singapore English (Ho and Platt 1993) often do. The second set discussed in Mesthrie (2006) concerns additions rather than "undeletions". These are features which frequently insert an additional element into the syntax, contrary to the patterns of std Eng. An example would be the use of cross-clausal conjunctions as in (62).

(62) **Although** I'm not that shy, **but** it's hard for me to make friends.

6. Conclusion

I have suggested that, far from being an unstable L2 variety (as error analyses have implied), mesolectal BSAE is quite regular. It incorporates a subsystem which is typologically consistent as an undeleting version of the TL (std Eng). The statistics provided show that undeletions do not occur categorically for any construction; rather there is variability. This variability seems to encompass the principles outlined by sociolinguists (Labov 1972; Chambers 2003) for L1 variation. In this instance, though, the origins of variability lie in the interplay between an undeleting system and a more standard system which speakers have to pay attention to, since they use their L2 more in educational and formal settings than in casual in-group speech.

The concept of 'undeletion' will, I believe, help characterise other New Englishes too, especially other varieties in Africa.¹⁵ Its origins must lie in the nature of the substrata, in which deletion and movement rules are rare. The details are beyond the scope of this paper (see Van der Spuy 1997 for Zulu; Du Plessis and Visser 1992 for Xhosa).¹⁶ Mesolectal BSAE

shows a pendulum swing between L1 tendencies that favour undeleting and the influence of settings required by the standard form of the TL.

Notes

1. This research arises from a project funded by an *ad hoc* grant (15/1/3/16/298), funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and from funding from the University Research committee at UCT. I gratefully acknowledge the participation of all interviewees cited in this paper, and of the following research assistants: Rose Smouse, Goodwell Fihla, Sarah Johnson, and Kirsten Moreira. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the UCT Linguistics Department's Spring Seminars of 2003 and the Linguistics Society of Southern Africa's 2003 annual meeting at the then Rand Afrikaans University. I thank the following people for comments on the paper: Bertus van Rooy, Vivian de Klerk, Johan Oosthuizen, Anthea Fraser Gupta, Edgar Schneider, and (especially) Tom Güldemann.
2. This is my experience of regular participation in a language programme on national radio.
3. Where applicable, a shared home language might be used (mostly Xhosa for these interviewees), or code-switching between English and an African language, or a township argot like Tsotsitaal, especially amongst males.
4. In some cases, young children are virtually picking up "cultivated" South African English as L1. These "post-acrolectal" norms, as I term them, are not of direct interest to this paper on L2 acquisition.
5. The same holds for potential counter-examples like *She asked that John leave*, where *that* is mandatory in the TL. My impression that the mesolectal BSAE equivalent is *She asked that John should leave* will be followed up in future experimental work.
6. To conclude the account of *that*, the related forms *as*, *as to*, and *as if* should be noted:
 - a. I wasn't ... like sure **as to** whether that would be detention, y'know.

- b. Because like **as** I said...
 - c. She's pretending **as if** she doesn't know Xhosa.
7. These *had me V* constructions are unidiomatic in mesolectal BSAE; hence there are no examples of them.
 8. Gough (1996:62) provides the example *That thing made me **to** know God*.
 9. Gough (1996: 62) provides the example *I felt inferior **to be** there*.
 10. Speakers 1 and 3 are excluded here as they did not use any bare infinitival verbs in the interviews.
 11. Two other types fall into this category: (i) copy pronouns in main clauses after relative clauses with indefinite heads, as in *But I knew, like, what I want, I'll get it*; and (ii) copy pronouns in main clauses having a *for ... to* clause as subject, as in *For her to use the word "shame", it doesn't mean that there is no other word in Zulu*.
 12. Gough (1996: 62) also provides the example *He left **being** thirsty* for "He left thirstily / in a thirsty state".
 13. The corollary arises out of the semantics of the auxiliary *can* in Principle 1.
 14. As discussed above, the exception to Principle 1 is the simple case of coordination as in *I went out and bought a shirt*, if we assume that deletion has occurred here (of the second occurrence of the pronoun *I* in the underlying structure). Such deletion is usual in std Eng and BSAE. The deletion analysis here is not, of course, as popular in generative syntax as it once was.
 15. Furthermore, the undeletion of grammatical elements in BSAE is matched, by coincidence, in the phonology in which vowel reduction, vowel deletion, consonant cluster reduction, *h*-dropping, yod-dropping, syllable loss, etc. are not particularly

common, compared to other varieties of South African English and international L1 Englishes.

16. Similarly, it would seem to me that the deleting tendencies of Singapore English are due to the majority substrate language, Chinese.

References

- Bowerman, S. 2004. The morphology and syntax of White South African English. In B. Kortmann, K. Burrige, R. Mesthrie, E. Schneider, and C. Upton (eds). *A handbook of varieties of English. Volume 2. Morphology and Syntax*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. pp. 948-961.
- Bokamba, E. 1982. The Africanization of English. In B. Kachru (ed). *The other tongue: English across cultures*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. pp. 125-147.
- Branford, J. (with W. Branford). 1991. *A dictionary of South African English*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Buthelezi, Q. 1995. South African Black English – lexical and syntactic characteristics. In R. Mesthrie (ed). *Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics*. Cape Town: David Philip. pp. 242-250.
- Cameron, D. 1995. *Verbal hygiene*. London: Routledge.
- Chambers, J.K. 2003. *Sociolinguistic theory*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chomsky, N. 1986. *Knowledge of language: Its nature, origin and use*. New York: Praeger.
- De Klerk, V. 2003. Xhosa English as an institutionalised variety of English: In search of evidence. *English World Wide* 24: 221-243.
- De Klerk, V. and D. Gough. 2002. Black South African English. In R. Mesthrie (ed). *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 356-380.
- Du Plessis, J.A. and M. Visser. 1992. *Xhosa syntax*. Pretoria: Via Afrika.
- Gough, D. 1996. Black English in South Africa. In V. de Klerk (ed). *Focus on South Africa*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. pp. 53-77.
- Ho, M.L. and J.T. Platt. 1993. *The dynamics of a contact continuum*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Huddleston, R. and G. Pullum. 2002. *Cambridge grammar of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Jespersen, O. 1927. *A modern English grammar on historical principles*. Part III: *Syntax*. Volume II. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Labov, W. 1972. *Sociolinguistic patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Lass, R. 2002. English in South Africa. In R. Mesthrie (ed). *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 104-126.
- Le Page, R. and A. Tabouret-Keller. 1985. *Acts of identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malan, K. 1996. Cape Flats English. In V. de Klerk (ed). *Focus on South Africa*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. pp. 125-148.
- Mesthrie, R. 1992. *English in language shift: The history, structure and sociolinguistics of South African Indian English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mesthrie, R. 1997. A sociolinguistic study of topicalisation phenomena in Black South African English. In E. Schneider (ed). *Englishes around the World*. Volume 2. *Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Australasia*. (Studies in Honour of Manfred Görlach). Amsterdam: Benjamins. pp. 119-140.
- Mesthrie, R. 2006. Anti-deletions in an L2 grammar: A study of Black South African English mesolect. *English World Wide* 27(2): 111–145.
- Mitchell, A.G. and A. Delbridge. 1965. *The pronunciation of English in Australia*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.
- Moreira, K. 2003. Black South African English: An examination of four 'undeleted' features in a second language variety. Unpublished Honours dissertation, Linguistics Section, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Cape Town.
- Mufwene, S. 2001. *The ecology of language evolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prince, E. 1981. Topicalisation, focus-movement and Yiddish-movement: A pragmatic differentiation. *Proceedings of the 7th meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*. pp. 249-64.
- Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svartvik. 1985. *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London and New York: Longman.
- Radford, A. 1988. *Transformational grammar: A first course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Rickford, J. 1974. The insights of the mesolect. In D. DeCamp and I. Hancock (eds). *Pidgins and creoles – Current trends and prospects*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press. pp. 92-117.
- Ross, J.R. 1986. *Infinite syntax – Language and being*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex. (Original title of 1968 mimeo: *Constraints on variables in syntax*).
- Schmied, J. 1991. *English in Africa: An introduction*. London: Longman.
- Siegel, J. 2001. The logical problem of substrate influence in creoles: The role of transfer in second language acquisition. Paper presented at the Third International Symposium on Bilingualism, Bristol, April 2001.
- Van der Spuy, A. 1997. Syntactic traces in Zulu. In R.K. Herbert (ed). *African linguistics at the crossroads – Papers from Kwaluseni*. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. pp. 297-310.
- Van Rooy, B. and G. van Huyssteen. 2000. The vowels of BSAE: Current knowledge and future prospects. *South African Journal of Linguistics* Supplement 38: 15-35.
- Watermeyer, S. 1993. Afrikaans English in the Western Cape – A descriptive sociolinguistic investigation. Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town.
- Wissing, D. 2002. Black South African English: A New English? Observations from a phonetic viewpoint. *World Englishes* 21: 129-144.
- Wright, L. 1996. The standardisation question in Black South African English. In V. de Klerk (ed). *Focus on South Africa*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. pp. 149-162.