

# Different Ways of Speaking: A Preliminary Investigation of Creativity in a South African Variety of English

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## Introduction

'Creativity' is the ability of speakers to innovate for a wide range of reasons and purposes and is recognized as part of the outcomes of using a language. According to Aitchison (2001:259) language change is a 'natural and inevitable' phenomenon that is irreversible. This view contrasts with that of self-proclaimed 'linguistic activists', such as the *New York Time's* columnist William Safire (cited in Aitchison 2001:259), or the well-known editor in the British publishing industry, James Cochrane, who recently published a book in which he denounces the 'sloppy use' of English (Cochrane 2004). They are among several people who are reluctant to accept new usages. While purists attempt to protect a language by restoring respect for basic rules, among other things, most linguists argue that a prescriptive attitude stifles creativity.

Linguistic creativity is triggered by new situations, experiences and thoughts. New lexical items, extensions or restrictions of lexical meanings of existing items emerge, or adaptations of sound patterns, morphology and syntax occur. English, which preoccupies us in this article, is one case *par excellence* of a 'dynamic' language characterised by ever-growing innovations. It has thus been touted as 'a borrowing language' (Stevens 1980: 85) in view of the increasing stock of borrowings entering its lexicon. A borrowing (also know as 'loan word') is a vocabulary item adopted from

one language (donor) into another language (host) with some level of phonological, morphological, syntactic, or semantic adaptation. In comparison to a code-switched form which can only occur in the speech of bilinguals and which does not require any level of adaptation, a borrowing/loan word occurs in the speech of both bilinguals and monolinguals (Haugen 1992; Poplack, Sankoff & Miller 1988).

Besides borrowing, different types of change occur within the English language itself. The coinage of new words, called 'neologisms', is one of them. A neologism is a new word, created out of existing elements. An example a neologism is *fluddle* which is used to refer to 'excess water on the road after a storm bigger than a puddle but smaller than a flood' (Crystal 1995: 132).

The use of 'nonce borrowings' may also change a language. This refers to those linguistic items that belong to one language but are used in another language. These items are transitional and eventually become accepted as loanwords/borrowings when used constantly. Another common type of internal lexical creation is 'conversion'. This process involves changing the lexical category that an item belongs to. This means that an existing word is assigned to a new category. For example, the transitive verbs *to shoulder* (e.g. one's responsibilities), *to elbow* (e.g. one's way), and *to wrist* (e.g. a ball over the net) derive respectively from the nouns: *shoulder*, *elbow*, and *wrist* respectively; the intransitive verb *to stiff-upper-lip* (e.g. through a ceremony or event) derives from the noun phrase *a stiff upper lip* (i.e. an expression of seriousness). In the same way, the infinitive verbs *to summer*, *to winter*, *to holiday*, and *to honeymoon* were created respectively from the following nouns: *summer*, *winter*, *a holiday*, and *a honeymoon*. These examples are cited in (O'Grady, Dobrovolsky & Katamba 1997: 2) and presented in example (1) below:

- (1) X *summered* in Singapore, Y *wintered* in Canada, Z *holidayed* in New Zealand, and we *honeymooned* in China.

Internal creations can also result from historical feats, or events of great proportions. For example, the verb *to Houdini* entered the English lexicon as a result of the great feats of the American escapologist, E. Weiss, who performed under the professional name of 'Houdini'. The expression *to*

*houdini* therefore means 'to perform an ingenuous escape' (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* 1995).

Similarly, innovations may also occur 'by analogy', a process involving either pattern deviation or pattern recreation. Illustrative of innovations by analogy is the expression *Out of the frying pan into the deep freezer* found in a corpus of naturally-occurring British English talk in the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) (Carter and McCarthy 1997). This expression was created, in casual conversation, by analogy to *Out of the frying pan into the fire*, a widely used expression for a new situation as bad as or even worse than a previous one.

Technological advances also trigger the coinage of new lexical items, or the semantic extension of existing ones to cover new materials. *Chip* is one such example of semantic extension that comes to mind. A 'chip' generally designates a small piece cut out of, chopped from, or fallen through breakage off wood, stone, or similar hard material. By extension, in electronics a silicon chip is a tiny wafer of semiconductor used in an integrated circuit. The choice of the lexical item *chip* was presumably inspired by the fact that a microchip is a piece chopped off a silicon plate. Note that although the term *microchip*, of which *chip* is a clipped form, is still in use, it occurs less frequently than 'chip'. Certain registers also create their own terms which are eventually incorporated into the lexicon and may sometimes undergo semantic shifts. In the travel industry, the verb *to waitlist*, derived through the process of back formation from *waiting list*, is probably as much part of the industry's lexicon as *to shortlist* (from *short list*) is of everyday English.

Finally, children, too, are credited with the ability for creativity. Below is an example of children's creativity in an interaction between two monolingual English-speaking pre-adolescent siblings:

- (2) S: Can you box?  
B: Oh, yes.  
S: Can you karate?

### Operationalizing Linguistic Creativity

Studying linguistic creativity as a phenomenon in non-literary language is a recent trend. In the old tradition, 'deviation' in stylistics (Short 1996;

Widdowson 1992) for the purpose of attracting attention was often highlighted as a classical example of creativity. Studies of spoken English (e.g. Carter and McCarthy 1995, 1997, 2004; Carter and Adolphs 2003) mostly from corpora<sup>1</sup> of naturally-occurring speech data, are illustrative of the new trend. Research in cognitive linguistics (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1999) has also lent itself to revealing the naturalness of creativity in everyday language, as has research in metaphor studies (e.g. Cameron 1999; Cameron and Low 1999; Lakoff and Turner 1989). Creativity is, therefore, no longer the preserve of literary language, as opposed to non-literary language. As a consequence of the recognition of its existence in aspects of language use other than literary creation, creativity has been approached from different perspectives and has been defined in various ways to suit specific research frameworks, and sometimes, the type of data and their context of production.

Accordingly, in their analyses of corpus-based data Carter and McCarthy (2004) adopted a non-formalist definitional framework that recognizes functions and contexts of creativity. They identify a wide range of instances of functions of linguistic creativity, from humour to the expression of an attitude; to highlight one's identity; for entertainment; to mark a transition between bits of talk, or to maintain the flow of talk (Carter and McCarthy 2004: 63-4). Given the variability of creativity in such spoken data, a formal definition, i.e. one based on formal features, is eschewed in this type of analysis.

In the study of a relatively unexplored variety of a language such as a South African variety of English, a formal definition is forms the basis of this article. The choice of a formal definition does not restrict it to Chomsky's (1964) basic view on creativity as applicable to invented sentences. Nor does it extend to stretches of discourse or text, a framework that would be more useful in analyses where the consideration of joint conditions of production (e.g. interactional talk) is indispensable. To arrive at a formal definition to guide the study of creativity in the variety studied in

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<sup>1</sup> Corpora of South African varieties of English (e.g. de Klerk 2002a, 2002b) are being created. They will offer a wealth of insights into creativity and other aspects of peculiarities in, among others, BSAE, when they are readily available.

this article, we must look at recurring patterns of language use and structures. The occurrence of new features (lexical items, functional words and phrases, micro-linguistic structures, rules of use) must be unique to the variety under investigation. It requires 'systematicity' in the relevant variety rather than mere occasional occurrences in idiolects. In this way, we can solve the problem of indeterminacy between cases of genuine innovations and idiosyncrasies that may be a result of limited knowledge of English (see Bamgbose 1998; Chisanga 1995; de Klerk 1996; de Klerk & Gough 2002; Wright 1996). In other words, there is a need to draw a line between, for example, the use of *with* which may be seen as an instinctively considered idiosyncrasy in example (3) below (drawn from an essay by an English second language-speaking first-year student) and the systematic use of *with*-combinations discussed later in the article as cases of creativity:

(3) A few days later, she receives a box from her husband. It was full *with* delicious foods and fruits...

The status of an innovation as a systematic new entry into a particular language/language variety is best established from corpus data, from which at least the first three of the following five criteria outlined by Bamgbose (1998:3) can be tested: 'authoritativeness' (status of users), 'demography' (number of users), 'acceptability' (attitude of users and non-users), 'codification' (sanction of use), and 'geography' (spread of use). This article, based on naturally-occurring speech by educated speakers in a South African English variety, is a prelude to corpus-based analyses which will take into consideration the criteria listed above.

### Legitimate vs. Illegitimate Forms

According to Kachru (1985), innovations are regarded as the hallmark of varieties in the 'Inner Circle'. The 'Inner Circle' refers to those countries where English is spoken as a native language. It is claimed that the varieties spoken in these places are endowed with the ability and 'legitimacy' to create and/or borrow. Concurring with this view, O'Grady, Dobrovolsky and Katamba (1997:1) state that creativity is the ability to respond to the demand of human thought and experience, or a set of 'resources that a language

makes available to *its native speakers*, those who have acquired it as children in a natural setting' [*my emphasis*].

The following data drawn from CANCODE (Carter & McCarthy 1997) are examples of morphological creativity in casual conversation by English first language-speakers: in one episode, a student refers to a fruit bowl as *salady* (i.e. a bowl suitable for keeping salad); in another episode, a speaker describes some newfangled shoelaces as '*elasticky* sort of stuff'; and in a third episode, another speaker rejects a pub that her friend has proposed they should go to because she finds it *mewsy* (i.e., resembling a mews). In all three examples, the speakers exploit the *-y* suffix to create diffuse and evaluative meaning (Carter & McCarthy 1997:164). Similar morphological creativity is achieved by adding the prefix *un-* to *solid* to refer to a 'loose' or 'slack' baby-cot as a 'baby-cot made *unsolid*'. All the above examples of innovations are considered as natural, legitimate occurrences primarily because they have been created by native speakers of English.

Purists<sup>2</sup>, such as Cochrane (2004), would probably tolerate some of these innovations. They would even welcome those which they regard as 'advantageous'—although it is a moot point what is and what is not advantageous. On the other hand, they would take a hard line against any forms or structures found only in varieties of English used by those who come from outside the Inner Circle. Such forms would be considered 'deviant forms'. For them, non-native varieties and their speakers are not entitled to the legitimacy of innovating that is recognized to native varieties and their speakers. From the purists' perspective, therefore, the following case of coinage by an English second language-speaking student at a US

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<sup>2</sup> Through centuries, 'purist' individuals and organizations, have rejected certain varieties of English which they believe to be 'substandard', i.e. inferior to 'standard' ones, and have advocated the maintenance of the latter to prevent what they see as 'the deterioration of English' (O'Grady, Dobrovolsky & Katamba 1996: 10). More recently, defenders of standard English, such as Prator (1968) and Quirk (1985, 1988, 1990), use the argument that a global standard form of English is necessary for comprehensibility. The use of the label 'purist' has no pejorative connotation. Aitchison (2001: 258) uses the euphemism 'Great Permitters' instead.

university (Hatch and Brown 1995:9), for example, cannot be considered as a case of creativity, because it was not created by a native speaker:

(4) A Korean student says that after *undergraduation*, she will study law.

Proponents of the World Englishes paradigm (Kachru 1986, 1992a, 1992b, 1997; Platt, Webber and Ho 1984; Smith and Forman 1997) disagree with the purists' perspective. They see creativity differently, given the pluralistic contexts of the use of English and view new varieties of English as independent varieties with established norms. From this perspective, creativity is a fully legitimate phenomenon in new Englishes (Bamgbose 1998; Bhatt 1995; Kasanga 2001d; Makalela 2004). This is a perspective with which this paper aligns itself. It rejects the view that these innovations are merely 'deviations from native-speaker norms'. The rejection of the legitimacy of creativity in new varieties of English is indeed, more sentimental than factual. As Aitchison (2001:258) observes, 'the judgments about what is good and what is bad are usually idiosyncratic, often based on subjective feelings about new words'. Bamgbose (1998:1) concurs with this position when he bemoans the stigmatization of creativity in non-native Englishes. He sees these innovations as being 'torn between two sets of norms'.

Innovations in non-native Englishes are often judged not for what they are or their function within the varieties in which they occur, but rather according to how they stand in relation to the norms of native Englishes.

I further argue that users of non-native varieties of English sometimes deliberately (rather than necessarily) use forms that are outside the norms of standard native varieties for various purposes. Educated non-native speakers (mostly bilingual or bi-dialectal) do innovate in this way. For instance, writers whose mastery of the English language is beyond question have deliberately used non-standard forms of English for the purpose of their stories. Mphahlele, one of the foremost South African black writers, uses 'nativized' forms of English in his novels to express local realities;

acculturation devices and short-cuts to preserve the reality of the African subject matter; and linguistic devices such as style-switching and nativization of speech functions to depict the richness of the multi-setting world of the story (see Kasanga 2002). Ngugi's use of non-standard forms of English in a novel written in standard English (see Kasanga & Kalume 1996) also typifies the deliberate nativization of English. Bamiro (1995:190) also considers the deliberate use of indigenised forms of English in West African literary works as 'testimony to the nativization of the English language'. These examples are innovations that should no longer be regarded as merely examples of inappropriate learning and use of English.

### **Black South African English: Collecting the Data**

The South African variety of English in focus here is widely referred to as 'Black South African English' (BSAE). This label has not met with universal approval, presumably because of its racial connotation. It is used here (and elsewhere) for want of a better one (see de Kadt 2001). The denial of its existence is not unique to this variety, but generally common to non-native varieties of English at a stage of their expansion (Kachru 1982). Bamgbose (1982:99) cites some Nigerian scholars who refused to accept the existence of Nigerian English. In view of the wealth of empirical findings in the past decade (e.g., Buthelezi 1995; de Klerk & Gough 2002; Gough 1996; Makalela 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2004), the existence of BSAE as a distinct variety, phonologically, semantically, syntactically, and pragmatically (Chick 1989; de Kadt 1992; Kasanga 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) is no longer much in doubt<sup>3</sup>.

The present analysis of creativity is based on a small corpus of naturally-occurring speech data collected over the course of four years. All the data came from educated speakers of BSAE, of both sexes, aged between 20 and 50 years, students and professionals, whose level of education ranged from a high school qualification (the ex-Standard 10 or Matriculation Certificate) to university diplomas and degrees (BA, MA, LLM and PhD).

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<sup>3</sup> A question still remains, however, of what constitutes BSAE (de Klerk & Gough 2002), given the wide range of levels of competence among BSAE speakers (de Klerk 1996).



Although the qualification of speakers on television or on the radio could not be ascertained, they all spoke BSAE fluently. In most cases, these instances were produced in circumstances in which I was not involved in the interaction. My status as an anonymous observer, therefore, afforded me ample latitude to take note in a fairly neutral position and with minimal risk of influencing the production of the speech data. In some cases, however, examples were taken from written sources, especially official documents. Local print media were not considered as a useful source of examples of creativity other than borrowings from African languages (for example *toyi toyi*) and coinages, such as *to condomize*, adopted in the ABC (i.e., Abstain, Be faithful, Condomize) AIDS campaign. Indeed, most neologisms depicting local linguistic flavours and all forms or structures outside the standard native forms are usually purged from texts once they fall under the red pen of copy-editors and sub-editors in South African mainstream print media<sup>4</sup>.

### Data Analysis

For ease and clarity of analysis, the new forms are discussed under the following three rubrics: *with-* combinations, conversion, and verb splitting. These constitute the most frequent features found in the corpus from which the data were drawn.

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<sup>4</sup>Where print media are run by speakers of new varieties, they (print media) certainly constitute an excellent source for data on the local variety of English. Chisanga (1987) and Kamwangamalu and Chisanga (1996, 1997), for example, found dozens of examples of forms peculiar to Southern African Englishes in print media in Zambia and Swaziland. Chisanga (2001) mentions also popular black print media in South Africa, such as *The Sowetan* and *The Star*, as a potential source of BSAE, something I have, nonetheless, not come across personally. In all these cases, indigenous editorial teams, speakers of new varieties of English, are more tolerant towards non-native structures than are English native-speaking editors in South Africa's print media, especially the broad sheets, who belong to a more normative breed of speakers of English.

### **With-combinations**

*With*-combination as 'complement structures' are one of the most frequently observed features of creativity in South African Englishes in general, and most notably, in BSAE (see Kasanga 2001a). The activity of 'studying towards a degree or diploma' and its outcome ('graduating') are more often than not expressed in BSAE by *with*-combinations. The structure is over-generalised to 'graduate + *with* + institution'. The use of this combination is exemplified in (5) and (6):

- (5) I graduated *with* the University of [...]. I also have teaching responsibilities *with* the [Faculty of...] of the University of [...]. I am presently learning French *with* UNISA.
- (6) ... I have completed my [Degree] *with* the University of ... which was conferred to me on...

In (5), an excerpt obtained from biographical data of a candidate external examiner shows that the subject uses 'graduated *with*' instead of 'graduated *from*', the preferred structure in native varieties. Similarly, 'completed my [Degree] *with*' in (6), found in an e-mail, would instead be 'completed my [Degree] *at*...' in native varieties. The creation of these new structures appears to be the over-generalisation of *with*-combinations from the 'study + *with* + institution' generally used in non-native varieties.

The phenomenon of over-generalisation observed in the use of *with*-combinations in the academic field seems to extend to several other activities, including the domain of 'leisure' as illustrated in the following example:

- (7) Come and join us *with* the spring race that will take place on Saturday, 22 September...

A reasonable prediction is that the over-generalisation of the use of *with* would also apply widely to the domain of 'work' or 'occupation', both because it is an 'activity' and because of the existence of the common expression 'work + *with* + employer'. Similarly, the use of *with*-combinations is widespread in public notices announcing speakers or

presenters at public lectures, artists at concerts in a 'Noun Phrase + *with* + Proper name' structure as in:

(8) A public lecture/seminar/concert *with* Prof/Dr/Ms...

The structure above refers to 'a public lecture or seminar presented, or a concert performed, *by* Prof/Dr/Ms...'

Outside the domains of 'studies' and 'work', over-generalisation of *with*-combinations encompasses cases of complements to apparently an unlimited range of verbs. An example is the following excerpt from a public notice:

(9) Problems are being encountered *with* the recovery of costs...

In native varieties, a different combination, as shown below, would have been preferred:

(10) Problems are being encountered *in* the recovery of costs...

Another common *with*- combination in BSAE is the structure 'be busy + *with* + Nominal' as exemplified below:

(11) We *are* happy that the government *is busy with* him.

(12) The South African Police Services *are* currently *busy with* the deceased...

The statement in (11) above was uttered in a television interview by a representative of land claimants in Mpumalanga, one who is regarded as highly proficient in English by his peers. In his statement, he refers to a white farmer, served with a notice of expropriation after having rejected the compensation offer. The interviewee meant '...the government is *dealing with* him'. The same structure, *be busy + Nominal* in (12), used in a live television coverage of the fatal stampede on 11 April 2001 at Ellis Park Stadium, is intended to mean '...*are dealing with*'.

The structure discussed above may well be a case of the generalisation of a larger structure found in several varieties of English spoken in South Africa, viz., 'be busy + *with* + V-ing' (Lass and Wright 1986). As this expression is not unique to BSAE only, it is not discussed further in this article. Lass and Wright (1986) dispute earlier assumptions of

contact as the origin of the expression and rather show that it is one of 'endogeny', i.e. a case of survival of standard English imported into South Africa centuries earlier (also see Mesthrie 1996, 1999).

Finally, some *with-* combinations occur through a mechanism of word formation similar to that of back formation. This is illustrated by the following example taken from an official document:

(13) The University had *contracted with* a debt collection company...

The verb (*to contract with*) is arguably derived from *a contract with* as in: 'to sign, have, conclude a *contract with*'. Indeed, in the same document, this expression is repeatedly used as shown in (14) to (19):

(14) The University must review *its contract with* ...

(15) An immediate termination of the *University's contract with*...

(16) The termination of the *University's contract with*...

(17) *A contract with* [Company's name] should be reviewed and...

(18) An immediate termination of the *University's contract with*...

(19) The University has long terminated *its contract with*...

Presumably, the same logic would guide the creation of structures whose meaning is similar to 'have a mutual obligation *with*', 'have an account *with*' and 'have a debt *with*'. The following excerpt from a popular phone-in radio talk show seems to suggest the possibility of other similar back formation-like *with-* combinations:

(20) Talk-show host: What happened to your...?

Caller: You put money *with* the insurance company and subsequently...

## Conversion

The morphological phenomenon of conversion is another mechanism used to create new words. This process involves changes to the lexical categorisation of a word. It mainly involves verbs that are created from adverbials, nominals, or particles (such as prepositions), as exemplified below:

- (21) Against the odds, she was able to *cum laude*
- (22) Ag, I didn't do well in that course during the year and in the final exam. I expect to *supplement*.
- (23) I will *via* your place.

The use of *to cum laude* in (21) is intended to mean 'she was able to pass her examination/degree *cum laude*' (Kasanga 2003). This expression is derived from the Latinate adverb *cum laude* (with distinction). In the same fashion, the verb *to supplement* (abbreviated as *to supp* in casual conversation), which means 'to sit for a supplementary examination', derives from the noun phrase '*supplementary examination*' (i.e. an examination offered as a second chance for a candidate to make up for a 'Fail' grade in the main examination). Finally, the verb *to via* is formed from the Latinate preposition *via*; therefore 'to *go via* some place' simply becomes 'to *via* some place'. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the innovation *to via* might be found in other African varieties, such as Ghanaian English. Closer to South Africa, *via* (used as a verb) has been found in a corpus of Chichewa (code-switched with English) in Malawi (Simango 2000:498). Note, however, that in the latter case, it means 'leave' or 'go'.

### Verb Splitting

An increasing number of transitive verbs have undergone 'intransitivization' within what I call the process of 'verb splitting'. In BSAE, this process yields two sets of uses. On the one hand, some transitive verbs remain intact and new intransitive uses emerge. On the other hand, intransitivization can occur, implying restricted semantic collocations, as are shown in the examples below.

- (24) Can we talk about it tomorrow?  
- No, tomorrow I *am writing*.
- (25) I have four modules. And there are three assignments per module. I must submit them between May and November. What is good about it is that I *will* only *write* in January of next year.

- (26) X had some difficulty last semester. She may need our assistance to enrol this semester.  
- No, she *wrote* last semester.

In the above examples, *to write* is object-less. This means that the verb is intransitive. The use of contextual clues may be either unproductive or misleading to a speaker of a different variety. In (24) which is an extract of a telephone conversation), the speaker means: 'No, tomorrow I *am writing* (= sitting for) *an examination*'. In (25), the speaker's intention (explaining over the phone to a friend the requirements for a course she had undertaken) is: 'What is good about it is that I *will not sit for the examinations* until January of next year'. To anyone unfamiliar with the use of *to write* in its intransitive use in BSAE, the utterance may be interpreted contextually as: 'What is good about it is that I *will only write my exam* in January of next year'. In (26) 'No, she *wrote* last semester' (a response by an instructor to the Head of Department enquiring if a student had encountered difficulties in enrolling for the second semester) is intended to mean: 'No, she *wrote* (= sat for) *the examination* last semester'. In BSAE, when used intransitively, *to write* always implies its semantic collocation with '(an) examination'. For any other writing activity, such as 'writing a letter, a motion, a complaint', the transitive use is required, i.e., 'write + object'.

'*Write an examination*', itself, may be a typical expression in the local variety. In native varieties, the following collocations are preferred in 'verb [write] + noun [(school) examination]' structure as equivalent to BSAE 'write' (i.e. take an examination): 'do, (re)sit (for), (re)take + examination' (Oxford Collocations Dictionary 2002). Preference for verbs such as 'do, (re)sit for' and '(re)take' is, presumably, to avoid the ambiguity that 'write' may convey. The following example of a conversation at a dinner party between a non-native speaker (NNS) and a native speaker (NS) of British English testifies to the potential of confusing speakers of native varieties of English:

- (27) NNS: She [NNS's wife] has still to write a few examinations.  
NS: Do you mean she will have to *set* a few examinations?  
NNS: No, she will have to *take* a few examinations.

In (27) 'write an examination' has different meanings for the NS and NNS. For the NNS examinations are written by an examiner, a person authorized to 'set examinations' (to 'write an examination' = to compose an examination); whereas for the NNS, examinations are written by an examinee, a person who is required to 'take examinations' ('to write an examination' = to take a written examination). An inference can be drawn (speculatively, though, as this may be) that the action of 'writing' which collocates with 'examinations' in BSAE has more to do with an 'examination tradition' that is generally executed in writing. Speakers of native varieties (British English in particular) are accustomed to 'taking an examination' that may be oral or written examination or to 'sitting for a (usually written) examination'.

Intransitivization in BSAE is also exemplified in the use of verbs such as: *to complete*, *to submit*, *to attend*, especially when they are used in, or refer to, an academic setting.

(28) I wish to advise that my doctoral work is proceeding well. I have submitted several chapters and I am writing the last two. I expect *to complete* by December.

(29) When are you *attending*?

On the basis of the context, *to complete* in (28) would be understood by speakers of native varieties as a transitive verb meaning 'to complete the two remaining chapters'. Indeed, deploying the intuition about anaphora on which ellipsis of *chapters* occurs after *the last two*, speakers of native varieties would assume the repetition of 'the last two (chapters)' was avoided. The absence of the reference term viz., 'them' after *complete* would be construed as either deliberate or involuntary. However in BSAE *to complete* in the academic context is always used intransitively to mean 'to meet the requirements for the awarding of the degree'. (I hasten to add that 'completing X chapters' whether or not they are the last ones, logically, is not necessarily equivalent to 'meeting the degree requirements'!) BSAE speakers refer to the completion of a homework, chapter, or anything other than 'course/degree (requirements)' usually by either adding the relevant object or by using an alternative transitive verb, for example *to finish* (without a complement where ellipsis can be inferred). In (29), *to attend* is

used intransitively. Its only collocates in BSAE are 'lecture', 'class' or 'lesson'. In contrast, *to attend* referring to any other activity such as a 'church service', 'court proceedings', a 'conference' or a 'wedding ceremony', is always used transitively in BSAE.

The intransitivization of verbs in BSAE is also illustrated in the use of *to owe*. The intransitive use of '*to owe (for) money*' in BSAE is coupled with a further constraint, viz., the use of the progressive aspect, as in:

(30) I haven't received my (final) results because I *am owing*.

As in the case of the intransitive uses of *to write* and *to complete* which, in BSAE, always refers to 'examinations' and 'course/degree requirements', *to owe* means 'to owe money (to someone)'. In native varieties of English *to owe*, in contrast, used transitively to mean 'be under obligation to a person, or pay or repay money', can collocate with a range of nominals, such as: 'a drink', 'an explanation', 'thanks' or 'one's life'.

Another use of *to owe* found in BSAE data is: '*to owe + someone + in + money*', instantiated in the following excerpt from an official notice:

(31) The following will not be accepted as adequate reasons for absence from examinations: 'Failing to receive examinations results because the student *owed* the University *in fees*'.

Compare the intransitive use of *to owe* (usually in *-ing* form) in (30) and *owe + someone + in + money* in (31) with the following use of *owing*, in a newspaper known for its scrupulous adherence to native norms:

(32) The Johannesburg High Court ruled in November last year that Kebble had to pay the R862029 *owing* [*Sunday Times - Metro*, March 25, 2001, page 5]

The use of the structure '*sum/balance + owing*' in (32) is typical of native varieties. Another use of *to owe* in native varieties of English is in combination with *for* resulting in an '*owe + object + prepositional object*' structure as in:

(33) Her employer still *owes her for* the over-time work of the past year.

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Unlike in British English, for example, where it is used transitively, in BSAE *to owe* has been intransitivized. The intransitivization of *to owe* narrows its semantic power, as it were, because only one implicit complement viz., 'money/balance' is assumed, as is in the case of *to write*, in the academic context, where only 'examination' is understood as its only (implicit) collocate.

## Conclusion

Linguistic creativity is a normal phenomenon which ensures the dynamism and evolution of natural languages. Speakers of native varieties of English innovate in casual speech for a wide range of functions, such as 'play functions', from humour to the expression of an attitude; social functions (e.g., to highlight one's identity); or discourse functions (e.g., to serve as conversational strategies such as marking a transition between bits of talk, or ensuring the maintenance of the flow of talk). In contrast, speakers of non-native varieties innovate to 'appropriate' or indigenize the English language by deliberately code-switching, style-switching, or borrowing from their own languages. They do this for a variety of purposes, such as: to preserve, reinforce, or achieve group identity, to express solidarity, or to mark choices and preferences. The choice of and preference for forms that suit their own variety of English appeal to a sense of identity which they ought to maintain in the same way they strive to maintain their own beliefs and cultural norms.

Following the World Englishes paradigm, I have argued in this article that creativity is a legitimate phenomenon in BSAE (as long as a clear demarcation is drawn between genuine cases of innovations and occasional idiosyncracies or manifestations of incomplete knowledge of the language) as the so-called 'deviations' are from the speech and writing of educated non-native English-speaking bilinguals, usually with a good grasp of English. Denying the legitimacy of creativity in non-native varieties has been more sentimental than factual, an attitude that has ignored the pluralistic contexts in which these forms are used and the functions they fulfill in the written and oral speech of non-native speakers of English.

The findings offered in this article are tentative, pending confirmation on the basis of data from much larger corpora. This caveat does, however, offer evidence of on-going creativity in BSAE, further

strengthening the suggestion of the distinctiveness of BSAE as a variety in its own right. Investigating the structure of innovative forms in BSAE, the different processes by which speakers innovate, and the functions of these innovations offer the users are indeed exciting areas for further research.

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