

EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH USAGE

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SUMMARY

The common usage of Black South African English (BSAE) forms the main focus of this study. Its usage by members of the black population has caused a major debate on language standards and usage, and acceptance of BSAE as a variety of English.

The purpose of this study was to establish employers' perceptions of BSAE usage by employees (and prospective employees). The employers' preferences, views on re-standardisation of English and the usage of English in South Africa were established.

The literature review dealt with topics related to the usage of English in South Africa, namely, the domains of English use, English usage and varieties of English - with specific focus on BSAE - and perceptions of English.

A questionnaire, with three application letters, was used as an instrument to investigate the perceptions of employers from different companies. The questionnaire examined issues of style and language usage, comprehensibility, language usage and employment, correctness and preferences in language usage, accent as a factor that influences employment opportunities, and re-standardisation and the standard of English usage in South Africa.

The results indicate that most employers appreciate a well-written application letter and they regard correctness in written communication as very important. Most of them seem to be familiar with the grammatical and lexical features of BSAE, but the application letter with BSAE features is considered the least comprehensible. Therefore, BSAE may still be unacceptable or even stigmatised, and may affect employment opportunities in some cases.

Although the British model of English is preferred by the majority of the employers, they agree that the African model is widely used in South Africa and at the workplace. The results also indicate an awareness of sociolinguistic variations and the possibility of accepting the re-standardisation of English in future.

According to the findings, accent is unimportant. However, in some cases, proficiency in English may play a role as prerequisite for employment.

The results of this study show the importance of proper teaching of English at school level, with the inclusion of Business English to prepare learners for the workplace.

Keywords: attitudes, perceptions, language(s), dialects, varieties, standards, re-standardisation, English, new Englishes, world Englishes, global English, domains, society, employers, employees, employment, employment opportunities, workplace.

OPSOMMING

Die algemene gebruik van Black South African English (BSAE) vorm die hooffokus van hierdie studie. Die gebruik van hierdie taalvorm deur sommige van die swart bevolking in Suid-Afrika het 'n hewige debat in verband met taalstandaarde, taalgebruik en die aanvaarding van BSAE as 'n variëteit van Engels ontketen.

Die doel van hierdie studie was om vas te stel hoe werkgewers die werknemers (asook voornemende werknemers) se gebruik van hierdie taalvorm aanvaar. Daar is navorsing gedoen in verband met werkgewers se voorkeure en sienings van herstandaardisering van Engels en die gebruik van Engels in Suid-Afrika.

In die literatuurstudie is ondersoek ingestel na onderwerpe soos die gebruik van Engels in Suid-Afrika, die domeine van die gebruik, die gebruik en variëteite van Engels, met spesifieke fokus op BSAE en die persepsies in verband met Engels.

'n Vraelys, vergesel van drie aansoekbriewe, is as meetinstrument aangewend om ondersoek in te stel na waarnemings van werkgewers van verskillende firmas. Deur die vraelys is ondersoek ingestel na style en taalgebruik, verstaanbaarheid, taalgebruik en indiensneming, korrektheid en voorkeure in taalgebruik, aksent as 'n faktor waardeur werkgeleenthede beïnvloed word, en herstandaardisering en die standaard van Engels in Suid-Afrika.

Die resultate toon aan dat die meeste werkgewers 'n goedversogde aansoekbrief waardeur en dat hulle die korrektheid van geskrewe kommunikasie as belangrik ag. Die meeste van hulle blyk bekend te wees met die grammatikale en leksikale eienskappe van BSAE, maar die aansoekbrief waarin hierdie BSAE eienskappe voorkom, word as minder verstaanbaar beskou. BSAE kan dus steeds onaanvaarbaar of gestigmatiseer wees, en mag in sekere gevalle 'n invloed op geleenthede vir indiensneming uitoefen.

Alhoewel die Britse model van Engels deur die meerderheid van werkgewers verkies word, blyk dit dat hulle saamstem dat die Afrika model wydverspreid in Suid-Afrika en die werkplek gebruik word. Die resultate toon ook aan dat daar 'n bewustheid van sosio-linguistiese variasies voorkom en dat die moontlikheid van aanvaarding van herstandaardisering van Engels in die toekoms oorweeg word.

Volgens die bevindings is aksent van minder belang. Nogtans kan vaardigheid in Engels in sommige gevalle 'n rol speel as voorvereiste vir aanstelling.

Die resultate van hierdie studie dui op die belangrikheid van goeie en korrekte onderrig in Engels op skoolvlak, met die insluiting van Sake-Engels om leerders op die werkplek voor te berei.

Trefwoorde: gesindhede, waarnemings, taal/tale, dialekte, variëteite, standarde, herstandaardisering, Engels, nuwe vorms van Engels, globale Engels, domeine, gemeenskap, werkgewers, werknemers, indiensneming, werkgeleentheid, werkplek.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The emergence of a new English variety, predominantly amongst blacks, has triggered proposals for the re-standardisation of English in South Africa (e.g. C. van der Walt, 1997). This variety, called Black South African English (BSAE), has gradually developed as a result of the Bantu Education system that was designed for blacks in South Africa. Wright (1993:3) says in this regard: "As far as English is concerned, it (the education system) largely separated black learners from native speakers of the language, destroyed most educational environments in which English language competence could be systematically developed, and left the English of black South Africans to evolve haphazardly in the townships."

BSAE can be compared to other Englishes that have developed world-wide, referred to as World or New Englishes (Kachru, 1992). These new Englishes, such as Indian English, Singapore English, and West African English, deviate from Standard English. BSAE is characterised by many grammatical features similar to those identified in other varieties of the new Englishes. J.L. van der Walt (2001) states that "If one measures BSAE against the criteria for New Englishes, one can conclude that it satisfies the criteria."

The issue of standards in English has been the subject of debate recently. Quirk (1997) argues for the maintenance of Standard English, as opposed to Kachru's recognition of the new Englishes. Kachru (1985) represents the spread of English in three circles: the inner, the outer and the expanding circles. Indigenised standards have developed in the outer circle where English is used as a second

language, and “these standards are becoming publicly legitimised” (J.L. van der Walt, 2001).

Re-standardisation of English is regarded as appropriate for the present democratic political dispensation in South Africa. For example, Ndebele (1987) states that “South African English must be open to the possibility of its becoming a new language.” The debate on re-standardisation has recently been conducted in South Africa. For example, Webb (1997) argues that a local variety of English should be recognised, and C. van der Walt (1997) makes out a case for the re-standardisation of South African English, in strong opposition to Titlestad (1997), who argues in favour of the maintenance of Standard English. C. van der Walt (1997) states that “I do not think we can develop or describe South African varieties if our attitude towards them is that they are underdeveloped, incomplete systems of learner language.” Titlestad (1997), however, stresses the advantages of Standard English and the problems that may arise if re-standardised grammatical forms are accepted.

The grammatical features of BSAE have been described by a number of researchers (e.g. Buthelezi, 1989; Gough, 1996). The “standardness” of these features has been determined by Gough (1996), J.L. van der Walt (2001) and Makalela (1998). Van der Walt (2001) concludes that the grammatical features of BSAE are widely used and accepted by a large section of black educated South Africans, and Makalela (1998) concludes that BSAE has become “an institutionalised variety: a language variety which is shared and understood across a wide cross-section of English speaking Black South Africans.”

It is well known that the unemployment rate is very high in South Africa, especially in rural areas. Proficiency in Standard English has been viewed as an important factor in determining and shaping people's careers (Rousseau et al., 1989). While much work has been done on perceptions of accent, not much is known about perceptions of grammatical usage. The reaction of employers to

'new' grammatical forms and possible re-standardisation would be crucial to seekers of employment (cf. Adger, 1997), as this reaction may play an important role in their decisions to employ people. The reaction of employers to 'new' forms and re-standardised English would depend upon their perceptions of BSAE usage. Webb (1997) states that "the heart of the problem, in my opinion, is the negative attitude of ... people from the general public (such as employers) towards language forms which differ from the 'received linguistic behaviour'". Little is known of perceptions of so-called 'new' grammatical forms of English, as very little research has been done in this regard. Only Kachru (1982) mentions a limited investigation of perceptions of various grammatical models of English in India. The perceptions of employers in South Africa, in particular, have not been investigated, and it is therefore necessary to do this.

The following two questions arise:

- ◆ What are the perceptions of employers of applicants using a BSAE variant of Standard English in writing?
- ◆ What are the employers' views on the standard of English that should be maintained in South Africa, and what are their reasons for these views?

1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are to determine:

- ◆ the perceptions of employers of applicants using a BSAE variant of English in writing.
- ◆ employers' views on the standard of English that should be maintained in South Africa, and the reasons for these views.

1.3 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Relevant literature on the domains of English in South Africa, new Englishes, BSAE and perceptions of English usage was reviewed.

In the empirical section a one-shot cross-sectional survey was conducted. The subjects comprised twenty five human resources managers of different institutions in Pietersburg, Northern Province.

A questionnaire was used to establish the employers' perceptions of English usage at the workplace and in society. The data were analysed by means of descriptive statistics.

1.4 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: The domains of English in South Africa

Chapter 3: English usage in South Africa

Chapter 4: Perceptions of English

Chapter 5: Method of research

Chapter 6: Results and discussion

Chapter 7: Conclusion and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

THE DOMAINS OF ENGLISH USE IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the domains of English use in South Africa. As one of the eleven constitutionally official languages, English dominates in most areas of language use. Webb (1996:176) states that in South Africa English is "...quantitatively the best known language...". But, according to De Klerk and Gough (in press), only about seven million blacks in South Africa have a command of English. The strength and power of English seem to lie in the fact that it is preferred by most users in the multilingual South African society.

2.2 LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS IN SOCIETY

Kachru (1985:58) classifies English use into four sections:

- The instrumental function is performed by English as a medium of learning at various stages in the education system of the country.
- The regulative function entails use of English in those contexts in which language is used to regulate conduct, for example, the legal system and administration.
- The interpersonal function is performed in two senses: first, as a link language between speakers of various (often mutually unintelligible) languages and dialects in linguistically and culturally pluralistic societies; and second, by providing a code which symbolises modernisation and elitism.
- The imaginative/ innovative function refers to the use of English in various literary genres.

Titlestad (1995:179) identifies the following needs that a language functioning in society must meet:

The needs of mother tongue, home language, speakers and learners.

The sociolinguistic aspects of language.

The need for an international language.

The needs for tertiary education (and higher secondary education).

The requirements of the law and of legislation.

The requirements of government, parliament and the civil service.

The needs of business and commerce.

The needs of science and technology.

South Africa needs a linking language (*lingua franca*), or more than one, so that internal communication can take place.

All these functions are performed by English in South Africa: English is used as a *lingua franca*, as medium of instruction in education, for social interaction, in business, trade and industry; law, science and technology; in government; the media, and it is an important language for purposes of employment.

The use of English in various domains requires the use of appropriate register, that is, specific vocabulary and style used in a particular domain. Wardhaugh (1992:49) defines registers as "sets of vocabulary items associated with discrete occupational or social groups". Competence in English includes the ability to use the relevant vocabulary associated with the particular domain. According to Ridout and Clarke (1971:301), every language situation has its appropriate type of language or register.

2.3 ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Current English, a *lingua franca* is a

language adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different. This explanation fits the use of English in various South African contexts, since its speakers are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Wardhaugh (1992:56) provides the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation's definition of lingua franca and says it is " a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication". According to Wardhaugh (1992), a lingua franca can be spoken in different varieties. This suggests that the different varieties of English can be used as lingua franca. These varieties are Afrikaans South African English, Black South African English, Indian South African English, and Coloured South African English. The only criterion is that they should be mutually intelligible.

Branford (1996:36) refers to a lingua franca as a " linking language " or a "language of wider communication". As a lingua franca, English plays the role of bringing people together, because they share a common language. They are thus able to identify with one another.

According to Ffolliott (1992:3), English is the principal international language of communication. People moving beyond South African boundaries and abroad can use English to communicate with people from other countries. It is imperative, therefore, that all citizens be communicatively competent in English. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) states that English "is currently the language of access to further education and ... it is an established lingua franca in South Africa and further afield" (cited in Titlestad, 1995:184).

English has always played the role of lingua franca in South Africa. Mawasha (quoted in Potter, 1995: 205) predicts that English "will continue to function as a lingua franca". Lanham (1978: 188) confirms that, "... because of its prime

status... its future as lingua franca in South Africa is beyond dispute...".

2.4 THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN EDUCATION

2.4.1 TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT

English is a subject taught in all South African schools - as first language to mother tongue speakers, and as second language to non-native speakers. In black schools, English is taught from the first year of school entrance. English is then taught up to grade twelve, the culmination of school education (Lanham, 1978: 191). At this stage learners must have gained substantial knowledge of English and be communicatively competent in English. The aim of English teaching is to equip learners with communicative competence in a multilingual society.

The teaching of English focuses on the four major learning skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The syllabus for each level of learning provides the items to be dealt with; that is, what the teacher is expected to teach. It serves as guidance for the teacher, with the aid of prescribed teaching material. Teaching also includes literature in the form of poetry, plays and novels, depending on the level of the learners.

2.4.2 ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

English became medium of instruction after the 1976 student uprising in Soweto. According to Alexander (1989:4), parents and students resisted the use of Afrikaans or the native language as medium of instruction. Potter (1995:197) states that the black parent population, however illiterate, opted for English as

medium of instruction.

English as medium of instruction was also the teachers' preference (Lanham, 1978:196). Around 1972, the teachers' union, then known as the African Teachers' Association of South Africa (ATASA), submitted a memorandum to the Department of Bantu Education which read: "... the medium of instruction from standard three to Senior Certificate should be English" (Lanham, 1978:196). This view was supported by educationists. According to Mawasha (quoted in Potter, 1995:201), "English will remain the medium of instruction in Black education for many years to come".

The implementation of English as medium in black schools has been problematic because it does not lead to effective teaching in many classrooms. According to Amuzu (1991:137), teachers often explain in the native language or translate English into the native language. This state of affairs can be attributed to the poor quality of teacher training which most of today's teachers have undergone. Branford (1996:42) states that many teachers were trained in Stage 2, whose English, through no fault of their own, was inadequate. There is a vast need for teacher development programmes, such as in-service training and retraining for "both professional and academic upliftment of teachers" (Amuzu, 1991:137).

2.4.3 ENGLISH IN ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION

Basic adult education is necessary to eradicate illiteracy in South Africa. One of the best ways of empowering people is to educate them. Given access to education is like extending their degree of freedom and emancipation (De Kadt, 1993:163). English plays a vital role in adult literacy education. For adult learning, knowledge of English is a necessity, for it is generally perceived "as a language for life" (Potter, 1995:197). To those not entirely illiterate in English, advanced knowledge is desired for specific reasons, for example, acquiring better

employment, promotion, or an improvement of one's communication skills.

The workplace requires workers to be competent and proficient in English. In South Africa, there are business institutions that provide literacy programmes for their employees. Most well-established business institutions provide this kind of facility. Lanham (1978:198) confirms that the extent of illiteracy among blacks is significant enough " to prompt business organisations to promote national literacy programmes".

2.4.4 ENGLISH IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

English serves as medium of instruction in tertiary and higher institutions of learning. According to Murray and Mescht (1996:255), English is "actually growing in importance as a medium of instruction in colleges, technikons and universities".

In the past, not all institutions of higher learning were English medium. At present English "is increasingly becoming the tertiary medium" (Titlestad, 1996:165) and students from all racial and cultural backgrounds are accommodated at these institutions.

2.4.5 LIBRARIES

Titlestad (1995:179) mentions that the bulk of books in libraries are in English. Libraries are sources of information for learners and the public in general. They are national resource centres that provide education and knowledge for all, including children. A large percentage of learning materials and books on various fields of study is published in English. This percentage includes a considerable number of literary works produced by black authors. Gordimer (1976:110) bears

testimony to the black writing in South Africa. She quotes the works of "writers such as Lewis Nkosi, Can Themba, Casey Motsisi, and Ezekiel Mphahlele".

Proficiency in English is necessary for people to make effective use of the information stored in libraries.

Access to the library also means access to knowledge of various fields. People need to be literate in English in order to gain access to information. The knowledge gained could be used as a springboard to a better life.

2.5 SOCIAL INTERACTION

According to Gough (1996:53), figures of black South Africans who have knowledge of English range from 32% to 61%, according to the 1991 census. De Kadt (1993:314) states that only 29% of the South African population are competent in English. (Gough acknowledges disparities in the estimates.) However, of all the eleven languages, English is the language most often used in social circles where people from different language backgrounds interact with one another.

Research has shown that English "is the second best known language in South Africa, and it is functionally the strongest" (Webb, 1996:176). South Africa's multilingual society chooses to use English in most social settings. When people come together they use language as a form of association and identity, and there is a sense of belonging that connects them (cf. Schmied, 1991:176).

A typical example is the way English is valued as a national language of sport. The value attached to it can be seen in "the way South Africans express themselves on and around sporting fields and also in the terminology used by sportsmen and sportswomen" (Claasen, 1995:367). According to Claasen, the

use of English in sport can be attributed to the fact that most sporting activities are of British Commonwealth origin.

English is increasingly being used as a mode of communication amongst blacks. Lanham (1978:189) acknowledges that "Blacks are now recognised as a permanent feature of White urban society, so that Black pupils in Soweto, for example, while attending ethno-linguistically discrete schools, need a lingua franca to communicate with friends across the street who speak a different Bantu language, which they might find difficult to understand". This statement shows that knowledge of English bridges the communication gap between speakers from different linguistic backgrounds.

Research has shown that individuals prefer to communicate in English for various reasons. De Klerk's (1996:121) research on language usage outside the classroom explains why individuals choose to use English. Some of her respondents indicated that they chose English "because there was no other lingua franca", while others chose English "in order to interact with English".

2.6 BUSINESS, TRADE AND INDUSTRY

English is the main means of communication in business, trade and industry. Lanham (1996:20) states that business activity in English started in the 19th century when the British immigrated to South Africa and took over power from the Dutch. The British settlers came to dominate the labour and mining industries. Being powerful, they influenced the use of British English among business associates and labourers. From that time English spread to other parts of South Africa, from the Eastern Cape to Natal and the Witwatersrand (cf. Watts, 1976:42).

The use of English has always been maintained in corporate structures in South

Africa. According to Price (1997:21), English has been “adopted as the 'super official language' of the present government, local authorities and business”. Price (1997) mentions that the Labour Relations Act of 1996 is written in plain English to facilitate communication in the corporate world. She mentions that other countries, Japan for instance, have realised the need to master English “in order to trade successfully with their powerful English speaking trading partners”. For similar reasons, South Africa has to maintain the use of English, by virtue of being part of the international business sector (Titlestad, 1995:180).

2.7 LAW, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

English is internationally regarded as the most relevant language for legal, scientific and technological advancement. McCrum et al. (1992:33) state that “English is probably the most powerful link language in science “. Titlestad (1995:179) states that English is the ‘language of record’ in law and legislation. (He argues that standard English is the model appropriate for the requirements of law in South Africa.)

2.8 GOVERNMENT

According to Titlestad (1996:166), communication in government and in different departments must be in English. He argues against the use of multiple languages in parliament, which involves high costs of translation into other languages. In South Africa, English is used more often than any of the eleven languages in parliament sittings as well as official gatherings. Although the South African language policy promotes recognition and development of the other languages, English is the only language that is significantly represented in all nine provinces (De Klerk, 1999:316).

2.9 THE MEDIA

Gough (1996:55) states that English dominates South African media services. Most channels on television, for instance SABC 3, E-TV, M-NET, are broadcast in English. Television entertainment is predominantly English, with quite a considerable number of American productions (De Klerk, 1999:316).

Research has shown that the majority of blacks are newspaper and magazine readers (Branford, 1996:44). Most of the popular newspapers, for example, The Sowetan, City Press, and Sunday Times, are published in English. The editor of The Sowetan, Aggrey Klaaste, is a black man; so are others, for example Khanyi Dhlomo-Mkhize of True Love magazine. It is also noticeable that most South African black journalists report in English. By virtue of their status in society they become role models and they are also influential as far as language use is concerned.

2.10 EMPLOYMENT

There is a general feeling that English provides access to job opportunities (Branford, 1996:36). The vast majority of the working class finds it necessary to improve their communicative competence in English, so that they can achieve a standard that would give them access to job opportunities and higher positions (De Kadt, 1993:316).

The research study by Rousseau et al. (1989:2) shows that employers have certain expectations of their employees with regard to language proficiency. The study poses this question: "What are the needs, requirements and expectations of employers in connection with school leavers' language abilities?" The results (Rousseau et al., 1989: 86) "indicate that language abilities form part of the requirements for employment" (translated from Afrikaans).

Smit (1995:216) argues that certain language standards have to be met by employees "in order to carry out their official duties properly and efficiently". At various institutions employees are required to sit for language tests prior to employment to ensure that the right people are employed.

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the domains of English use in South Africa. English plays a dominant role in education, business, commercial and professional domains (cf. Lanham, 1982:347). The spread of English by the British when they immigrated to South Africa in 1820 led to the entrenchment of English in many areas of language use. Titlestad (1996) states that "English is the foremost language of international communication and learning and a significant language of intranational communication".

This chapter has also indicated the need for proficiency in English with regard to the employment situation, which this study attempts to address. Research has shown that competence in English is regarded as a requirement for employment (cf. Rousseau et al., 1989).

CHAPTER 3

ENGLISH USAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses English usage within the South African context. The concept usage, as used in this chapter, follows Widdowson's description (1978:3) as "one aspect of performance, that which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules". According to Ellis (1994:13), usage involves "the formal properties of the phonological, lexical, and grammatical systems" of a language. These aspects of language will form part of the discussion in this chapter. The first part presents a brief overview of English as a world language and its expansion to all parts of the world. The position of English as a global language and the emergence of world Englishes are discussed. Kachru's model of world Englishes is then discussed. It will be noted that South Africa is not included in this model, because of its complex multilingual and cultural diversity. However, the model provides an explanation for the development of varieties of English in South Africa. This explanation could, to some extent, justify the acceptance of Black South African English (BSAE) as "a variety in its own right" (Gough, 1996:57; De Klerk & Gough, in press).

The L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) varieties of South African English (SAE) and their speech communities are also discussed. There is a specific focus on BSAE and the proposal for its re-standardisation, and some grammatical features typical of BSAE are presented.

3.2 ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

3.2.1 A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

English has gained global status due to its spread to various parts of the world. Over two thousand years ago, before Julius Caesar landed in Britain, English did not exist. It is now spoken by a population of native speakers of between five and seven million. At the time when William Shakespeare was born, in 1564, English was only a language of “small reach, it stretcheth no further than this island of ours, naie not there over all” (McCrum et al., 1992:9). According to Quirk (1985:1), English was then known “almost exclusively to its native speakers”.

The spread of English to some countries took place through the process of colonisation. Crystal (1997:24) identifies two factors that are linked to the spread of English. First, the geographical-historical factor, which refers to the “expansion which continued with the nineteenth century colonial developments in Africa and the South Pacific”. Second, the socio-cultural factor, which refers to the “way people all over the world have come to depend on English for their well being”. English spread to most African countries, for instance, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia and Swaziland, through colonialism (Schmied, 1996:302; Kamwangamalu & Chisanga, 1996:286). In South Africa many people depend on English, as it is used in many social and political spheres (cf. previous chapter). McCrum et al. (1992:32) refer to the spread of English as the “global sway” which has taken place in two levels. First, in the British colonies, where “a second language has become accepted as a fact of cultural life that cannot be wished away”. The second level is based on the fact that English has become “the one foreign language that much of the world wants to learn”. It is within the context of language spread that English, and not any other language, has acquired global status.

Crystal (1997:2) states that a language achieves global status when “it develops a special role that is recognised in every country”. English has achieved a special role in many countries, particularly as a lingua franca. In most countries it is chosen above the indigenous languages as official language, as a medium of instruction, or as the language for administration (cf. Titlestad, 1996:165-166).

The movement and expansion of English all over the world resulted in its increased and extensive usage. In the process it cut across many different cultures and languages, and as it came into contact with other languages it changed, becoming distinct from the imported parent variety (Moag, 1993:235).

3.2.2 WORLD ENGLISHES: CIRCLES OF EXPANSION

The concept of World Englishes refers to the different English varieties around the world (Kachru, 1985:355). These varieties are different from one another in linguistic features such as pronunciation, lexical choice or usage and grammar (Kachru & Nelson, 1996:72). According to Kachru and Nelson (1996:73), World Englishes are, strictly speaking, dialects. But, because the term ‘dialect’ has acquired negative associations, the term ‘variety’ is used instead.

Kachru (1985) provides a model of the spread of English in three concentric circles: the inner circle, the outer/extended circle and the expanding circle.

3.2.2.1 THE INNER CIRCLE

The inner circle refers to the traditional, cultural and linguistic bases of English, where English is the primary language. According to Kachru and Nelson (1996:77), the inner circle comprises the old-variety English-using countries, viz. the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New

Zealand. The two major varieties used in this circle are British English and American English.

3.2.2.2 THE OUTER/EXTENDED CIRCLE

The outer circle involves the earlier phases of the spread of English and its institutionalisation in non-native contexts. It represents the following countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zambia. The countries are mostly multilingual and English plays a major role as a second language in them. These regions were colonised by the countries in the inner circle (Kachru, 1985:12), and as a result, their political, cultural and linguistic structures were changed.

According to J.L. van der Walt (2001:1), non-native varieties of English in the outer circle have been institutionalised and publicly legitimised. Kachru (1985:13) mentions that, by virtue of the multilingual setting, the varieties in this circle share a number of common characteristics. These include:

- ◆ English is one of two or more codes in the linguistic repertoire of the bilinguals or multilinguals.
- ◆ English has acquired an important status in the language policies of most of such multilingual nations.
- ◆ English functions in what may be considered traditionally 'un-English' cultural contexts.
- ◆ English has a wide spectrum of domains in which it is used with varying degrees of competence by members of society, both as an intranational and an international language.
- ◆ English has developed nativised literary traditions in different genres such as novel, poetry, short story, poetry and essay.

3.2.2.3 THE EXPANDING CIRCLE

This circle is the remotest from the inner circle. The countries in this circle have not experienced any form of colonialism. The circle is rapidly expanding, and the users of English actually “strengthen the claims of English as an international or universal language” (Kachru, 1985:13). The countries include Japan, China, USSR, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Zimbabwe. Crystal (1997:54) mentions that the number of countries in this circle is steadily increasing. English is not given official status or any administrative function in them. English is used as a foreign language, not as second language, as is the case with the outer circle, and it is widely used for specific purposes, for example, in science and in technology (Kachru & Nelson, 1996:78).

South Africa is not included in Kachru's concentric circles. This is so because the situation in South Africa is a “sociolinguistically complex one” (J.L.van der Walt, 2001:2). However, South Africa seems to share some characteristics and features considered in the outer circle. In a later description, Kachru and Nelson (1996:78) do include South Africa in the outer circle.

3.3 ENGLISH IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.3.1 VARIETIES OF SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH (SAE)

Two distinct varieties of English, namely, first and second language (L1 and L2) varieties, are found in South Africa. In essence, classification into these subdivisions is based on ethnic lines (Mesthrie & McCormick, 1993:30; Smit, 1996:84). In a multilingual South African society ethnicity and social class have played a major role as discriminatory factors in political, economic and language matters. Hence, L2 varieties are often referred to as ‘deviations’ from the standard norm (Kachru, 1985:62).

3.3.1.1 L1 VARIETIES

The L1 varieties of English in South Africa are Conservative, Respectable and Extreme SAE. According to Smit (1996:85), the terms Cultivated, General and Broad are used as alternatives. Linguistically the three varieties represent a dialect continuum: acrolect, mesolect and basilect, respectively (Kachru, 1992:4). The acrolect resembles a model closest to the standard norm, and the basilect is furthest from the standard. These varieties are historically associated with the British descendants, originally the first language speakers of English (Mesthrie & McCormick, 1993:23). Indian SAE and Coloured SAE are increasingly included as L1 varieties, as many members of these population groups have adopted English as their mother tongue.

Conservative (Cultivated) SAE

Conservative SAE is the variety closest to Standard British English by comparison, and the most prestigious. Lanham (1978:147) claims that its pronunciation is hardly distinct from general Received Pronunciation (RP), and its speakers highly regard British tradition, formality and sophistication. The majority of the speakers of Conservative SAE were born before World War II, and in accordance with the upper class, they held "high socio-economic status, resident in Natal or the 'English' cities" (Smit, 1996:85). Conservative SAE is mainly characterised by Standard British English vocabulary and syntax (Mesthrie & McCormick, 1993:32).

Respectable (Cultivated) SAE

Respectable SAE is the mesolect and the more indigenous variety. Mesthrie and McCormick (1993) associate it with nineteenth century English usage in Natal.

However, Watermeyer (1996:100) associates Respectable SAE with the whites in Cape Town, who had tertiary education and lived in a restricted area.

Extreme (Broad) SAE

Extreme SAE is linguistically the most local variety - a basilect - because it is the form furthest from the standard norm. It is a stigmatised variety in the sense that "it tends to be corrected at school" (Smit, 1996:85). It is also associated with lower class, non-standard speech and Afrikaans influence. Despite the stigmatisation, Extreme SAE has positive values as a symbol of patriotism, masculinity, toughness and sporting excellence (Lanham, 1978:151). It is at times confused with Afrikaans SAE, yet it is a "first language in its own right" (Mesthrie & McCormick, 1993:33). Smit (1996:87) asserts that in status and pronunciation it is so close to AfrSAE that many cannot tell the difference.

Indian SAE

The speakers of Indian SAE are of South African Indian descent who arrived in Natal as labourers with no knowledge of English. They picked up English through communication with the highly educated British sugar-estate owners, and they later learnt it at school. For them, English started as a second language, and with widespread use and increasing knowledge through education, it became their first language (Mesthrie, 1996:134). Initially a disadvantaged population group, they acquired education and knowledge of English for economic reasons (Branford, 1996:46). Today, English is the first language of the majority of the Indian population. According to Mesthrie (1996:88), a lectal continuum exists within Indian SAE. Its discourse is characterised by the use of short forms, for example, "y'all" as a plural pronoun, and the frequent use of the phrase "too much of".

Coloured SAE

Like Indian SAE, Coloured SAE is now a L1 variety. Having gone through a long process of establishment, Coloured SAE started as L2 and gradually became an L1 variety (Malan, 1996:132). According to De Kadt (1993:314), initially most coloureds in the Cape used Afrikaans. They gradually code-switched between Afrikaans and English, and they became fluent as English began to dominate their lives.

3.3.1.2 L2 VARIETIES

The two second-language varieties discussed here are Afrikaans SAE and Black SAE.

Afrikaans SAE (AfrSAE)

The speakers of AfrSAE are the Afrikaans speaking community of South Africa. Combrinck (1978:69) mentions a powerful characteristic of the Afrikaans population: "a history of staunch maintenance of culture and identity". Watermeyer (1996:99) states that there is no such thing as an Afrikaans English speech community, because Afrikaans speakers naturally use Afrikaans among themselves. However, Branford (1996:39) mentions the domination of Afrikaans by English, which led to the emergence of AfrSAE. Lanham (1978:140) makes a distinction between educated AfrSAE used by the upper class, and basilect, uneducated AfrSAE, which is at times confused with Extreme SAE (cf. Mesthrie & McCormick, 1993:33). Watermeyer (1996:99) also points out that features of AfrSAE are common in other L2 varieties, as well as L1 English varieties. These include, for instance, hypercorrection and overgeneralisation. Other distinctive features are a heavy accent, the word final trilled /r/ as in 'never', and the

epenthic /h/ included in 'situation' and 'creation'. Some grammatical features show relatedness to Afrikaans influence, for example, 'how goes it?', 'he borrowed his book to me' and 'on the moment' (Lanham, 1982:341).

According to Lanham (1982:341), AfrSAE has contributed a range of vocabulary that appears in the Oxford dictionaries, including words such as *aardvark*, *blesbok*, *kraal*, and more. In Cooper's (1989:40) view, AfrSAE is placed on the same level with white SAE (cf. Smit, 1996:87).

Black SAE (BSAE)

The speakers of BSAE comprise the majority of the South African population, the first language speakers of the country's indigenous languages. Among the entire black population, knowledge and use of English depends mostly on the level of education they have attained. There are completely fluent and eloquent speakers of English, and in contrast, those with very limited knowledge of English or none, "including today many of the victims of the collapse of black education in the 1980s" (Branford, 1996:43). According to De Klerk and Gough (in press), it is difficult to ascertain how many blacks have knowledge of English. This could probably account for the lectal continuum found in the usage of English among blacks. According to Gough (1996:56), the acrolect is spoken by the educated, and the less educated use the basilect. And within the acrolect there appears to be a distinction between "private school", "Model C" and "DET (Department of Education and Training)" black Englishes. These distinguish the types of schools black children in South Africa attend.

BSAE gained ground in almost all environments of communication in South Africa. The inadequate teaching of English by non-native speakers gave rise to the non-native forms of English (Wright, 1996:151). The forms that learners became exposed to manifested themselves as models, in pronunciation and

syntax (De Klerk & Gough, in press), and learners adopted these forms in their everyday use.

3.4 BSAE: A NEW ENGLISH?

The question of BSAE as a new English relates to the development of other Englishes around the world, particularly in the outer concentric circles (Kachru, 1992:3). At present, there is an ongoing debate concerning the acceptance of BSAE as a distinct “new” English.

The proponents of the maintenance of Standard English argue on a number of issues, for example, comprehensibility, intelligibility, standardness of the new variety and the functions of English. For example, Titlestad (1995) argues that English must fulfil intranational and international functions, and this can be done only through Standard English. He emphasises that Standard English is the variety that every child has to be taught (1995:180). This argument poses a question considering black education and the teaching of English (as discussed earlier in this section). Titlestad demonstrates what Standard English entails by providing two English versions of a piece of writing by Chinua Achebe (Titlestad, 1995:183). He states that “there is more than one kind of Standard English”, the one better than the other. Titlestad regards the new BSAE variety as ‘non-standard’, a mixture of ‘errors’ and ‘individual mistakes’ rather than a codifiable new English. Finn (1986:1) labels the deviations from standard English as “habitual language use, or abuse”. He claims that many second language users are “generally incompetent and cannot produce acceptable English under any circumstance”. Finn bases his argument on the findings of a study of the writing of black university students. The same stance is taken by Prinsloo (1997:241). She argues that Standard English is not only important for overall effective communication and as a norm in the teaching process, but also that it is “that language form that has already undergone the standardisation process”

(translated from Afrikaans).

In contrast, C. van der Walt's (1997: 18) approach is to consider the possibility of the re-standardisation of English in South Africa. She argues that intelligibility of communication, which is the overriding objection against a new variety, does not necessarily "depend on the degree to which speakers/writers conform to a specific first language speaker variety". This is true in practice, given the everyday use of English by blacks in different communication contexts. According to C. van der Walt, the perception that South African varieties are undeveloped, incomplete systems of 'learner language' needs to be changed. She suggests that people need to be flexible enough to accommodate linguistic changes when the need arises. She admits that insufficient work has so far been done on the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of the varieties of English in South Africa. However, she proposes the acceptance of BSAE because its linguistic features are "so widespread that they can be said to have become features of a specific code" (C. van der Walt, 1997:19; cf. also Wade, 1999:2; Makalela, 1998:1; Gough 1996:70).

Webb (1996) poses a strong argument against the promotion of Standard English, as proposed by Titlestad. Taking into account the necessity of knowing English, he argues that within the South African context the use of only one variety could be seen as unattainable. Those who cannot get access to the Standard English environment will be "left behind". Webb (1996:182/3) argues that, as Standard English is used by the politically and economically empowered community, it marginalises other varieties and acts as a barrier to users of non-standard varieties. He also argues against the setting and prescription of norms by external bodies, such as the English Academy, without considering the needs of the people. Webb points out that "South African speakers of English will ultimately determine their own norms" (cf. also Makalela, 1998:18).

3.5 GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF BSAE

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of employers towards BSAE. A number of typical BSAE grammatical features which include morphological, syntactic and lexical structures, are presented below to illustrate this variety. These features have been obtained from various sources.

Gender conflation in pronouns:

I am a young woman who has just finished his degree.

She came to see me yesterday (where referent is male).

Extension of the progressive to stative verbs:

My mother is having only Std 8 and she does not earn a lot of money.

The dog is belonging to the child.

Embedded questions:

She asked me why didn't I tell her I'm busy.

Unfortunately we don't know where is she at the moment.

Pronoun copying:

Me I like nice things.

My book it was stolen while I was away.

Mixing Tenses:

They took one frog and go with it home.

He bought a watch which he sells last week.

Concord:

They both gets to know each other.

The survival of a person depend on education.

Word order:

A solution it was not easy to find.

They buy always clothes for their children.

Use of the infinitive:

When I refused the man started to beating me.

He began to changed the subject.

Preposition usage:

She started working there since from last year.

The students discussed about their work with the lecturer.

Non-count as count nouns:

She was carrying a luggage.

She is a person full of advices.

'Somebody' for 'person':

She's a hardworking somebody suitable for the job.

At work they need a highly skilled somebody.

Fixed expressions:

It was my first time to visit the zoo.

On my side I don't think this is relevant.

The use of 'am' in the past tense:

I am matriculated at Moqhaka High School.

They failed because they played while I am studying.

Comparisons:

She is beautiful than other women.

Some people think they are better to others.

(Gough, 1996:61-63; J.L. van der Walt, 2000:8-9; Finn, 1986:3-5; Makalela, 1998:3-9; Wade, 1999:2-5; Mesthrie & McCormick, 1993:37)

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with English usage in South Africa, starting with an overview of English as a global language. The spread of English to other countries and the emergence of World Englishes, according to Kachru (1985) and Kachru and Nelson (1996), were discussed. The issue of the recognition of BSAE was referred to, and it seems it can be considered as a South African variety. A list of some grammatical features illustrates BSAE usage. These features are widespread and commonly used among many if not most black speakers of English. The features also display considerable systematicity and rule-governedness (Wade, 1999).

CHAPTER 4

PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is to examine the perceptions of employers towards the usage of BSAE in South Africa. This chapter discusses perceptions of English in general, which reveals information with regard to peoples' feelings, preferences, and possibly expectations as far as English use is concerned (De Klerk & Bosch, 1994: 50). The word 'perception' as used in this study broadly embraces opinions, feelings, views, beliefs and values (Smit, 1996: 50). Both the positive and the negative aspects of perceptions might serve as input towards peoples' choices and expectations, and to some extent, deal with fears related to language use. According to research, positive perceptions are associated with language competence. According to Ellis (1994:200; cf. also De Klerk, 1996:122), the greater the competence, the more positive the attitude towards the language and its speakers.

Dube (1992:19) echoes this view by using the concept 'language milieu', that is, "the more contact a person has with the second language, the more positive are his reactions towards that language". According to Vikram (1993, quoted in Branford, 1996), some positive (and disguised negative) perceptions can be deduced from this extract:

'People love English!' said the farmer... ' If you talk in English you are a king. The more you can mystify, the more people will respect you'.

(Branford, 1996: 35)

4.2 PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE

The concept of 'dominant language' refers to the placing of speakers of the language in higher or lower positions, and the ranking of languages as inferior or superior (Branford, 1996:35). In South Africa, English has played a dominant role because of its functions in many domains of use (cf. Chapter 2). It has taken the highest ranking, above Afrikaans and the indigenous languages, as an official language and as a lingua franca (Webb, 1996:175). Notwithstanding the language rights in the present dispensation with regard to language equity, English continues to dominate other languages. The Langtag Report (1996) addresses the issue of "the hegemony of English" and points out that the other languages are marginalized, especially in the media, by for example, the SABC. The general feeling is that the hegemony of English disempowers society, and it overlooks the language equity bill. However, the prevailing perception is that English is too powerful for all other languages (Webb, 1996:176). Albie Sachs (quoted in De Klerk, 1996:111) points out that "all language rights are rights against English, which in the modern world is such a powerful language that it needs no protection at all".

The debate about the power of English goes hand in hand with the view of English as a colonial language. According to Kachru (1986:5), the British used English as a tool of power "to cultivate its culture to a group of people who will identify with the cultural and other norms of political elite". English is also perceived as an imposition by the British on their arrival in South Africa to extend their colonial rule. Ndebele (1991:103) comments that "White speakers must enlarge their constituency; they can only do this by enlarging the influence of their language."

According to Webb (1996:177), in a multilingual and multicultural society, elitism and discrimination are related to the linguistic competence of the non-native

speakers in the dominant language. The speakers' linguistic competence provides access to social mobility, economic, political and educational opportunities. Social status, as embodied in elitism, is more often than not determined by linguistic competence. The achievement of competence in Standard English, according to Titlestad (1996:169), is equated with social and professional advantages. It is clearly implied that those who are linguistically incompetent "would be left behind" (Webb, 1996:176), thereby creating or perpetuating the problem of discrimination in society. Discrimination, in this sense, results from the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. Society would also be divided into social classes. Within the South African context social class exists both racially, between whites and blacks, and linguistically, among blacks, where the degree of language proficiency in English is involved (Webb, 1996:177).

To many Black South Africans, "education appears to have become synonymous with the acquisition of English" (Ndebele, 1991:115; De Kadt, 1993:317). According to Ndebele, English does not carry all the wisdom of the world, as it is perceived by many. There has recently been a large number of black enrolments at previously white-only English-medium schools. De Klerk and Gough (in press) and Mesthrie (1996:79) associate this influx to white schools with loss of loyalty to the mother tongue. There is increasing loyalty to English and "a consequential steady language shift ... is beginning to make itself felt". Despite the perception that English dominates the language spectrum in South Africa, English displays a powerful magnetic attraction in black education. Today the international world seems to be more accessible than ever before. English proficiency becomes overwhelmingly more desirable because of its role as a world-linking language (Titlestad, 1996:166).

One perception that has carried weight is the association of English with liberation, independence and political power in South Africa (Webb, 1996:181). According to Lanham (1974:286), English interestingly poses a paradox:

allegedly the language of the oppressor and the voice for freedom and African identity (he refers to English in Africa). English was used as a tool for the struggle against the past regime by the political movements. In particular, in the quest for liberation, the ANC and PAC sought refuge in other countries, and their modus operandi was carried out in English (De Klerk, 1999:316). Most of the black institutions of higher learning in South Africa became the powerhouse of the struggle and English was the means of all communication (De Klerk & Gough, in press).

4.3 PERCEPTIONS OF SAE VARIETIES

The previous chapter discussed L1 and L2 varieties of SAE. The L1 varieties represent a closeness to Standard English and are regarded as superior to L2 varieties. Standard SAE is, as such, perceived as the norm that all English institutions should emulate, hence the debate about standard and non-standard varieties. Standard SAE is perceived as the representative model for academic progress, higher social status, empowerment and opportunities (Titlestad, 1996:168).

The fear that non-standard varieties would distort the international communicative value of English has been expressed by a number of language experts. Prince Charles (1992:6) shares the same sentiment and commitment to the enduring standards of “good grammar”. He, however, admits that “English is a language of almost ultimate flexibility, capable of adaptation to every continent and every circumstance”. He also mentions an important issue in the perception of language varieties. He refers to English as a “profoundly democratic language to which everyone can contribute. As such, it is inevitable that English will continue to develop in line with new discoveries, new social phenomena and new thoughts”.

The issue of BSAE will be placed into focus at this juncture. Discussions prior to this chapter have shown the emergence of BSAE. Proponents of the non-standard varieties regard it as a variety in its own right, while its opponents view it as non-standard, unacceptable and deficient (De Klerk, 1999:317). However, perceptions of BSAE seem to be changing. According to De Klerk (1999:317), the negative perceptions of BSAE seem to be fading away and a “sign of increasing confidence in its value” is emerging. De Klerk cites the use of BSAE by YFM Radio and an extract from an advertisement featuring BSAE usage. The shift of perceptions of BSAE may be the beginning of further development in the re-standardisation process. De Klerk (1999:318) presumes that BSAE is likely to act as a “powerful national unifier, bridging the gap between speakers of often very different indigenous languages”.

4.4 PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH AT VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The high regard of English in schools and homes, social settings, government gatherings and institutions of higher learning has already been referred to. The prevalent view is the value of English as an asset and a tool for advancement in life.

The focus in this chapter will now be directed at perceptions of English at the workplace, as an institution of everyday use of English. De Kadt (1993:315-316) gives a picture of the acquisition of English by “ordinary workers” who had not progressed far at school. Her study shows that some workers “picked up” English on the job, some started by learning “kitchen English”, and others used a combination of English and mother tongue. Whichever way, they all agree that it “is essential to know English today, the main reason being that it is of use in the work situation, and, indeed, helps one to find work”.

4.5 PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH USERS AMONG BLACKS

Despite the importance of English in society, the potential of marginalisation is ever present. English competence among the black population varies greatly - from the very competent, mostly the elite who had access to proper schooling, to the less competent speakers of English. Both De Klerk and Bosch (1996:232) and De Klerk (1999:318) mention that group stereotypes as well as prejudices arise due to perceptions of the less competent speakers by the more competent speakers of English. De Kadt's (1993:317) research reveals both positive and negative perceptions. There is "pride that their own people can express themselves in English". The respondents in her study mention pride, jealousy, arrogance, hatred and anger towards English users. However, positive views could be beneficial to the less competent through motivation and influence by competent speakers.

4.6 PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH ACCENTS

According to Jeffery (1993:6), accent is not standardised, and it flows into the different varieties of English worldwide. There is a perception among black South Africans that Standard English entails the Standard British RP accent. According to Webb (1996:184), the influence of the media has played a role in promoting this perception. For example, the voices of black people heard on TV and over the radio emulate RP, or an accent very close to it. Recently there has been a shift of perception, however, as African accents seem to be accommodated on radio and TV.

According to Titlestad (1996:167), the belief that Standard English entails accent is a myth. Standard English can be spoken in any accent. Accent plays a role in society. As Webb (1996:184) puts it, "your accent can render you socially and

occupationally acceptable or unacceptable.” According to Holmes (1992:357), the way people speak “affect[s] employers’ decisions about who to hire”.

The research studies by Kachru (1992) and Van der Walt and Van Rooy (2001) shed light on perceptions and preference of accents. Kachru’s study comes to the conclusion that his respondents, students in India, have not come to accept their own nativised variety. Van der Walt and Van Rooy’s (2001:17-18) study reveals that English Second Language teachers prefer “good” models of pronunciation, however vague this label might be. This reflects a degree of confusion about the standard of English in South Africa. Most of the teachers identify their accents as an African one, while some of them choose a mixture of British, American and African accents.

4.7 PERCEPTIONS OF GRAMMAR

The strong argument against non-native varieties of English is the perception that their grammatical structure deviates from the norm of standard English. Although little is known about perceptions of grammar, two studies, Kachru (1992) and Van der Walt and Van Rooy (2001) make reference to this issue.

Kachru (1992:61) makes use of the term “deviation” to refer to the linguistic and contextual nativeness of the non-native varieties of English. According to Kachru (1992:48), the term “norm” entails “prescriptivism” and “conformity” to the native speakers of a language, which would serve as a standard model. Kachru (1992:62) makes a clear distinction between “mistakes” or “errors” and “deviations”. Kachru (1997:71) defines “mistake” as “an acquisitional deficiency in phonology, grammar, pragmatics and so on”. A mistake is unacceptable and it is not the result of the productive processes used in an institutionalised non-native variety. A “deviation” is the result of a “new un-English” linguistic and cultural setting in which the English language is used, and it is the result of a productive

process which marks the typical variety-specific features.

According to Kachru (1992:60), localised and nativised varieties were at first not accepted by native speakers of English. Traditionally they were considered as grammatically “deficient models of language acquisition”, as indicated above. However, later on the distinctiveness of institutionalised varieties came to be recognised. Kachru also indicates that non-native speakers themselves do not readily accept the usage of local varieties. He conducted a study of Indian graduate students' preferences on the various models of English, and found a remarkable preference of British English to Indian and American English.

Van der Walt and Van Rooy (2001:6) define the term “norm” as “a language of quality and ability, acceptable and regarded as ‘correct’ by educated users”. In general, deviations from the norm are regarded as grammatical “errors” that, according to prescriptivists, cannot be considered language varieties. Van der Walt and Van Rooy conducted a study of black English Second Language teachers' perceptions of the norm. The teachers preferred a “good” model of grammar, followed by their preference of the British Standard. The results reflect almost similar preferences as those yielded by Kachru (1992), indicating that the respondents value the “norm, accuracy and correctness very highly” (Van der Walt & Van Rooy, 2001:18). Furthermore, the teachers rated their ability in grammar above average, while rating their learners below average (Van der Walt & Van Rooy, 2001:20).

4.8 CONCLUSION

Lanham (1974:286) observes the paradox lying within perceptions of English. On one hand, the perceptions reveal fears and antagonism towards English. English is perceived as the language of the oppressor, and of imperialism. According to Ndebele (1991), English has no innocence, hence the association with British

colonial powers. Alexander (1996) shares the view that “while English is important, it also has the oppressive potential” (cited in McDermott, 1998:116). On the other hand, English is perceived as “the voice for presenting the case for freedom and the African identity to the world” (Lanham, 1974:286).

The discussion of perceptions towards English aimed to highlight perceptions substantiated by research findings. The changing perceptions towards L2 varieties, in particular BSAE, might possibly contribute to its acceptance as a variety of English in South Africa. Holmes (1992) reports the same state of affairs with regard to Black English in America.

This study takes into cognisance the problem of choosing which, between the acrolectal and basilectal forms of BSAE, are to be re-standardised, a problem which needs more rigorous research (De Klerk, 1999:314). However, BSAE is fast becoming popular as the language the people “want” (De Klerk, 1999:314). According to Lanham (1996:37-38), the “majority of black South Africans today align more with Professor Ndebele who seeks not only for acceptance of BSAE, but the extension of its norms to South African English generally”. Van der Walt and Van Rooy (2001:39) conclude that “a new, amorphous, but rapidly growing form of language is ‘ghosting’ the standard in our educational institutions”.

The research studies by Kachru and Van der Walt and Van Rooy on perceptions of accent and grammar provide some information about people’s preferences. However, there is a need for more research on this issue to corroborate these findings.

CHAPTER 5

METHOD OF RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The method of research used to obtain data for this study is described in this chapter. The description is outlined under the following sub-headings:

- ◆ Design
- ◆ Subjects
- ◆ Instrumentation
- ◆ Data collection and
- ◆ Data analysis.

5.2 DESIGN

A one-shot cross-sectional survey was conducted.

5.3 SUBJECTS

The subjects were all human resources managers of different institutions in Pietersburg, the capital city of the Northern Province. They were selected from all businesses in the city to give the study a wide coverage and representation from different institutions. The categories and numbers are as follows: civil service (n=3), bank (n=2), post office (n=1), hospital (n=3), media (n=1), hospitality (n=1), university (n=1), church (n=1), private company (n=2), insurance (n=3), chain store (n=2), book store (n=1), airport (n=1), garage (n=1), and parastatal (n=2).

Originally, the subjects were 30 in number. However, due to policies of some of the companies, 5 of the subjects could not respond to the questionnaire. Of the 25 respondents, 18 were male and 7 were female, their ages ranging from 21 to 61. All came from different language backgrounds. Of the 25 who responded, 9 indicated Afrikaans as their first language, 7 were N. Sotho, 3 English, 2 Siswati, 2 Venda, 1 Sotho and 1 Zulu. Four were university graduates, 5 were post-graduates, 1 had a doctorate, 5 had Standard 10 certificates, 6 had diplomas and 4 did not specify their qualifications.

5.4 INSTRUMENTATION

A questionnaire (cf. Appendix D) was used to survey the employers' perceptions of English usage at the workplace and by society in general. The instrument was used to achieve "greater uniformity and greater comparability" in their responses (Dreyer, 1997:224). A cover letter (cf. Appendix E), in which the researcher explained the purpose of the study, accompanied the questionnaire. The right to confidentiality was also ensured by the researcher.

The instrument comprised two sections. Three letters of application for a job, viz. A, B and C (cf. Appendices A, B and C), accompanied section A. The letters were identical, but they differed in terms of language usage and the usage of BSAE features.

Letter A (Appendix A) contained the following BSAE features (cf. Chapter 3):

- ◆ I am a young woman who has just finished his Business Communication degree on Potchefstroom University (gender conflation in pronouns).
- ◆ I am a young woman who has just finished his Business Communication degree on Potchefstroom University (inappropriate preposition).
- ◆ I am also having a diploma in Production Management (extension of the progressive tense to stative tense).

- ◆ I am also having a diploma in Production Management, which I received it at Pretoria Technikon (pronoun copying).
- ◆ I think my qualifications are relevant to the position and I am the good administrator (incorrect use of definite article).
- ◆ I am a friendly somebody who likes to communicate with people ('somebody' for 'person').
- ◆ I love the administration work (incorrect use of definite article).
- ◆ I love the administration work and will love to work in the well-organised office (incorrect use of definite article).
- ◆ This will be my first time job (fixed expression).
- ◆ It is difficult to get employment these nowadays (fixed expression).
- ◆ I am having my matric certificate and my degree certificate (extension of progressive tense).
- ◆ If I have to fill ^ any forms, please send them to me (omission of preposition).
- ◆ I hope the informations I gave you is enough (non-count as count noun).

Letter B was correctly written in terms of language usage and grammatical aspects (cf. Appendix B).

Letter C had common grammatical errors as follows:

- ◆ I wish to apply for the job of assistant to the General Manager, as advertise in the Star of 2 June 2001 (as advertised)
- ◆ I am a young woman who just finished her Business Communication degree at Potchefstroom University (who has just finished)
- ◆ I also have a diploma in Production Management, which I receive at Pretoria Technikon (which I received at)
- ◆ I think my qualifications is relevant to the position and I am a good administrator (qualifications are)
- ◆ I am a friendly person who like to communicate with people (likes to)
- ◆ I am 23 years old, just finish on my degree (just finished with)

- ◆ If you need the documents I can fax it to you (can fax them)
- ◆ If I have to fill in any forms, please send it to me (send them)
- ◆ Thomas Street 1121 (1121 Thomas Street).

The subjects were requested to respond to questions concerning style, language usage, features of BSAE and comprehensibility, and issues of employment.

Section B dealt with general language use, accent and the re-standardisation of English in South Africa.

The questionnaire was constructed by means of the following questions:

1. Ranking questions

Example: Which of the 3 letters do you regard as the most well-written? (Section A: Question 1)

A	<input type="text"/>
B	<input type="text"/>
C	<input type="text"/>

The respondents were able to make value judgements of the three letters. The ranking questions can be summed and analysed quantitatively (Dreyer, 1997:227).

2. Scaled items

Example: How do you rate the three applicants in terms of language usage? (Section A: Question 5)

Very Good	<input type="text"/>
Good	<input type="text"/>
Fair	<input type="text"/>
Poor	<input type="text"/>

The respondents had to indicate their preferences and provide reasons for those preferences.

3. Likert-scale items

Example: How do you rate the letters in terms of comprehensibility?
(Section A: Question 6)

A: Comprehensible	1	2	3	4	5	Incomprehensible
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B: Comprehensible	1	2	3	4	5	Incomprehensible
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	------------------

C: Comprehensible	1	2	3	4	5	Incomprehensible
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The Likert-scale is a 5-point scale ranging from 1-5. In this study point 1 is used to indicate the positive while point 5 is used to indicate the negative response. There is an assumption of equal intervals between responses (Dreyer 1997:228).

4. Categorical responses

Example: Is proficiency in English a prerequisite for employment in your institution?

Yes

No

Not Quite

The respondents had to indicate "Yes", "No" or "Not Quite". The respondents were requested to provide reasons for their answers.

5. Open-ended questions

Example: Comment generally on the standard of English usage in South Africa (Section B: Question 12).

Open-ended items are limitless and provide the respondents an opportunity to express themselves using their own words. However, there might be disadvantages in using the open-ended questions. For example, they need more time to be completed, respondents may stray from the question and most people do not like them (Dreyer, 1997:227).

In this study, the open-ended item was used to give respondents an opportunity to elaborate on their perceptions and experiences of English usage in South Africa. Their responses might shed light on people's expectations as far as English usage is concerned, and might also bear significant contribution towards conducting future language-related studies.

5.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The researcher made appointments with the human resources managers and questionnaires were delivered. Some respondents readily provided the researcher with the days and time for collection, and others called the researcher when the questionnaire was ready for collection. The researcher also made personal follow-up visits for collection.

5.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed by making use of descriptive statistics. Means, frequencies and percentages were determined.

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the results of this survey. The following sub-headings are used to present and discuss the collected data:

- ◆ Style and language usage
- ◆ Language usage and employment
- ◆ Correctness and preferences
- ◆ Accent as a factor that influences selection for employment
- ◆ Frequency of English usage and models of English used at the workplace
- ◆ Re-standardisation and the standard of English usage in South Africa.

The results are presented in frequencies (Fr) and percentages (%), and they follow the sequence of the questionnaire (cf. Appendix D). Non-responses are indicated as NR. As a consequence of the non responses, some of the percentages do not total up to 100% (cf. Table 12 and 13); the scores in both tables give a total of 99.9%. The respondents' reasons and comments are presented verbatim, for they provide substantial information that is relevant for the purpose of this study.

The results for section A are provided first, followed by section B (cf. Appendix D).

6.2 STYLE AND LANGUAGE USAGE

6.2.1 THE MOST WELL-WRITTEN LETTER (SECTION A: QUESTION 1)

Which of the three letters do you regard as the most well-written?

78.3% of the subjects identified Letter B as the most well-written letter (cf. Table 1). The reasons in Table 2 indicate that it was considered to be grammatically correct in terms of the usage of tense, gender and number. According to one of the subjects, the best English was used in this letter.

It is interesting to note that letters C (Appendix C) and A (Appendix A) were also chosen as the most well-written. 17.4% of the respondents chose letter C and only 4.3% chose letter A. Two subjects did not respond to this question (cf. Table 1).

The results reveal that while most of the subjects recognised the grammatically correct letter, some could not do so.

Table 1: The most well-written letter

	A	B	C	NR
Fr	1	18	4	2
%	4.3	78.3	17.4	–

Key

Fr = Frequency

% = Percentage

A: Letter A

C: Letter C

B: Letter B

NR = No response

Table 2: Reasons for the most well-written application letter

A	B	C
<p>-It reads much easier but not really fluent. -Letter A has slangs, e.g. 'friendly somebody' instead of 'a friendly person'.</p>	<p>-Tense and wording correct. -Tenses are well used. -Her genders are in order. -The most grammatically correct. -The writer has taken into consideration the tenses, plurals and singulars. -It is well written, the grammar is fine. -It is appealing and less complicated to write. -It is better than the other two. -Most fluent English used. -Tenses and grammar are the best. -Used English the best.</p>	<p>-Grammar and punctuation. -The letter of application is a persuasive document.</p>

Key

A: Letter A

B: Letter B

C: Letter C

6.2.2 THE LEAST WELL-WRITTEN LETTER (QUESTION 2)

Which of the three letters do you regard as the least well-written?

78.3% of the respondents identified letter A (Appendix A) as the least well-written (cf. Table 3). This letter contained BSAE features as described in chapters 3 and 5 of this study. Some of the reasons for this choice (cf. Table 4) refer to “poor language”, “mistakes” and “errors”. One of the respondents commented on the “usage of BSAE in sentence structures”. The remarks suggest that BSAE features are still unacceptable, perhaps even stigmatised.

Only 17.4% of the respondents identified the letter containing common grammatical errors, letter C, as the least well-written. The reasons given indicate that the subjects were proficient in English grammar (cf. Table 4).

It is again interesting that letter B was chosen by 4.3% of the respondents, but no reasons were provided (cf. Table 4). This shows that they could not recognise any BSAE features or common errors in the letter.

Table 3: The least well-written letter

	A	B	C	NR
Fr	18	1	4	2
%	78.3	4.3	17.4	–

Key

Fr = Frequency

% = Percentage

A: Letter A

B: Letter B

Table 4: Reasons for least well-written application letter

A	B	C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poor language, tenses wrong. -It has a number of mistakes. -A lot of mistakes, i.e. sentence construction, plural-singular forms. -Does not clearly express what the potential employer is interested in. -Poor grammar. -Poor tenses and grammar. -The writer is not aware of the present tense, past tense, and does not use appropriate pronouns. -The most grammatically incorrect. -8 errors. -Usage of BSAE in sentence structures. -More presentation mistakes, e.g. in the well-organised, friendly somebody. -Tenses (his ... her). -Grammar, punctuation and tenses. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Usage of adjectives and verbs in sentence construction not up to standard. Plurals and singular verbs mixed in a sentence. -It is grammatically wrong, e.g. as advertise, qualifications is. -Words missing.

6.2.3 THE LETTER WITH MOST BSAE FEATURES (QUESTIONS 3 & 4)

Which letter contains typical BSAE features?

68.2% of the subjects responded that letter A (Appendix A) had BSAE features (cf. Table 5). They could identify most of the features (cf. Table 6) explained in chapter 5. It would seem that these subjects were familiar with BSAE grammatical and lexical features.

18.2% of the respondents indicated that all letters had BSAE features, 9.1% letter C, and 4.5% letter B. This shows that these respondents were not very familiar with the grammatical and lexical features of BSAE.

Three subjects did not respond to the question. This probably suggests that they were also not familiar with BSAE features.

Table 5: The letter with most BSAE features

A		B		C		All		NR	
Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
15	68.2	1	4.5	2	9.1	4	18.2	3	–

Key:

Fr= Frequency

% = Percentage

A: Letter A

B: Letter B

C: Letter C

All: All three letters

NR = No response

Table 6: BSAE features identified by respondents

- Use of male pronoun for a woman.
- Usage of “a young woman” and referring to “her” as “his”.
- Pronoun switch; as advertise; “I am having” instead of “I have”
- “young woman who has just finished his Business Comm
- She is a woman but finished his business degree. He/she not used well.
- I am also having a diploma.
- I am also having a diploma instead of “I have got a diploma”.
- I am also having a diploma
- I am a friendly somebody I am having my matric certificate
- these nowadays
- It is difficult to get employment these nowadays.
- It is difficult to get employment these nowadays. Friendly somebody
- “which I received it” instead of “which I received”.

6.2.4 RATING OF THE APPLICANTS IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE USAGE (QUESTION 5)

How do you rate the applicants in terms of language usage?

Table 7 shows that the majority of the respondents, 62.5%, rated applicant B highly. 20.8% rated the applicant "fair" and 16.7% "poor". 50% rated letter C "fair" and 62.5% rated letter B as "poor". There seems to be no universal agreement as far as the rating is concerned. The reasons provided in Table 8 indicate that such judgements are very often subjective, and they may also reflect the respondents' own proficiency in English.

Table 7: Rating in terms of language usage

Letter	A					B					C				
	VG	G	F	P	NR	VG	G	F	P	NR	VG	G	F	P	NR
Fr	0	0	9	15	1	3	12	5	4	1	0	6	12	6	1
%	0	0	37.5	62.5	—	12.5	50	20.8	16.7	—	0	25	50	25	—

Key:

VG=Very Good

G=Good

F=Fair

P=Poor

NR=No response

Fr= Frequency

% = Percentage

Table 8: Reasons for rating in terms of language usage

A	B	C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Direct translation from or of Afrikaans language. -Tenses. -The grammar used is not poor as it can be understood. -Though there are a number of mistakes on his/her letter, the message is clear. -Prepositions and the use of articles are faulty. -Irrelevant information is provided. -Bad grammar. -Very poor grammar knowledge. -Usage of non-fluent English. -Repetition of issues, e.g. a young woman and 23 years old. -Too many predictable errors. -Could be much more to the point and fluent without starting with I am, I think that. -Typical African English. - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sentence construction better than the rest. -Written well. -It is understandable. -The message is loud and clear. -Nothing is unnecessarily repeated even if it's in another form. -Relevant information. -Error-free, ideas expressed clearly and logically, good grammar. -Already an improvement on applicant A. -Well educated, English is of a high standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sentence and wording better than A. -Understanding well. -Although it is understandable, it has a lot of mistakes. -Just like applicant A, quite a few mistakes on his/her letter and still shows that his/her English usage is not that good. But still the reader could be able to receive the message. -Most of the verbs do not reflect the correctness following singular/plural nouns. -Not professional. -Grammar. -Poor grammar. -Pretty much the same as applicant A. -Friendly somebody. -Too many predictable errors. -Fair education; English of a good standard.

6.3 COMPREHENSIBILITY

6.3.1 RATING IN TERMS OF COMPREHENSIBILITY (QUESTION 6)

How do you rate the letters in terms of comprehensibility?

Comprehensibility was measured on a scale ranging from 1 (high) to 5 (low). Once again, letter B was identified as the most comprehensible by 83.3% (i.e. average and above average). Letter C was regarded as comprehensible by 79.1%, and letter A by 50% (cf. Table 9).

The letter containing BSAE features was regarded as the least comprehensible. This indicates that the usage of BSAE features may, in some cases, play a role in decision-making processes for employment.

Table 9: Rating in terms of comprehensibility

	1		2		3		4		5		NR	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	
A	3	12.5	1	4.2	8	33.3	11	45.8	1	4.2	1	–
B	4	16.7	8	33.3	8	33.3	3	12.5	1	4.2	1	–
C	1	4.2	5	20.8	13	54.1	4	16.7	1	4.2	1	–

Key:

A: Letter A

B: Letter B

C: Letter C

NR = No response

6.3.2 COMPREHENSIBILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA AND INTERNATIONALLY (QUESTION 7 & 8)

Indicate which letter you think would be most comprehensible in South Africa.

25% of the subjects thought that letter B would be most comprehensible in South Africa. 12.5% chose letter C and letter A was not considered comprehensible (cf. Table 10). The results seem to confirm that comprehensibility may play a role in decisions for employment in some cases, as stated in 6.3.1.

Although 45.8% considered all letters to be comprehensible, 16.7% thought that none would be comprehensible in South Africa. Again, this may reflect the respondents' subjectivity to some extent, and their own proficiency in English (cf. 6.2.4).

Indicate which letter you think would be internationally most comprehensible.

Table 10 shows that 33.3% believed that letter B would be most comprehensible internationally. Only 4.2% chose letter C and another 4.2% letter A. This indicates that some employers regarded comprehensibility highly. Furthermore, it seems to suggest their high expectations of employees' proficiency in English.

16.7% of the respondents indicated that all letters would be internationally comprehensible, while 41.6% thought none would be internationally comprehensible. There is a clear indication of a lack of consensus as far as comprehensibility is concerned. Reasons for this are not clear. It may possibly be attributed to the subjects' own level of proficiency in English.

It is interesting to note that one subject indicated that letter A (with BSAE features) would be internationally comprehensible.

Table 10: Comprehensibility in South Africa and Internationally

	South Africa		International	
	Fr	%	Fr	%
A	0	0	1	4.2
B	6	25	8	33.3
C	3	12.5	1	4.2
All	11	45.8	4	16.7
None	4	16.7	10	41.6
NR	1	–	1	–

Key:

A: Letter A

B: Letter B

C: Letter C

All: All three letters

None: None of the letters

NR =No response

6.4 LANGUAGE USAGE AND EMPLOYMENT

6.4.1 POSITIONS AND LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT (QUESTION 9)

For employment in your company, in which position and at what level would you employ Applicant A, Applicant B, and Applicant C?

Table 11 provides evidence that 36% of the subjects would employ applicant B on a higher level than applicants C and A. This suggests that the higher one's proficiency in English, the higher the level of employment. It is thus clear that language proficiency may influence employment decisions.

The results also indicate that in most institutions, employment would be offered to the other applicants, although at levels lower than applicant B.

Table 11: Positions and levels of employment

A	B	C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supervisor -Financial Dept.: Entry level -Entry level -Postal assistant -Posts that require less communication. -Middle -Level 3 -Clerical, Patients' Administration -Entry level -Won't get past selection process -Will have to interview all applicants at first in order to place them. -Temporary employment -Entry level -Admin clerk- lowest level -Lower level- cleaner -Junior official -Any position -Clerk -Chief registry clerk (Level 7) -Clerical level (administrator/clerk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supervisor -Assistant to G.M.: Middle level -Entry level -Mail handler -Leadership positions -Top -Level 1 -Clerical- Patients' Administration -Entry level -Any position he/she is suited to. -Temporary employment -Entry level -Admin clerk- lowest level -Receptionist -Junior official -Any position -Clerk -Senior administrative officer (level 8) -Supervisory level- officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supervisor -Assistant to G.M.: Entry level. -Entry level -Mail handler -Supervisors and clerical. -Low Level 2 -Clerical- Patients' Administration -Entry level -Won't get past selection process. -Temporary employment -Entry level -Admin clerk- lowest level -Waiter -Junior official -Any position -Clerk -Administrative officer (level 7) -Clerical level- clerk/administrator)

**6.4.2 EMPLOYMENT OF A SECOND LANGUAGE SPEAKER OF ENGLISH
(QUESTION 10)**

Do you think a second language speaker of English who does not use standard English should be employed in your organisation?

An overwhelming 88% of the respondents were prepared to employ a second language speaker in their organisations, for different reasons (cf. Table 12). Some believed that employees would develop language and communication skills at work, while some were ready to offer in-service training. There seems to be a trend towards personal development programmes at the workplace in South

Africa.

However, 12% of the respondents would not employ a second language speaker of English (cf. Table 12). An insurance company indicated that English was the language of business (cf. chapter 2), and employees had to be communicatively competent in English as far as the world of business was concerned. This seems to correlate with the role of proficiency in English for employment purposes (cf. 6.4.1).

Table 12: Employment of a second language speaker who does not use standard English

Yes		No	
Fr	%	Fr	%
22	88	3	12
Reasons			
<p>-So long as the person could be able to convey the message loud and clear to the recipients and again for so long as she has got what it takes, i.e. the skills. I believe that given a chance, a person learns and develops and thus improves under supervision. (Bank).</p> <p>-We do not discriminate against poor English person. (Hospital).</p> <p>-There is always room for improvement. (Hospital).</p> <p>-Chance for anyone (Bookstore).</p> <p>-My matric market is predominantly Africans (Private company).</p> <p>-Business English could be learnt. (Parastatal).</p> <p>-As long as there is less guest impact. (Hospitality).</p> <p>-If s/he willing to learn and improve then that's okay. (Civil service).</p> <p>-In service training should improve communication skills. (University).</p> <p>-Equality is important. (Insurance).</p> <p>-Language is not the only merit for selection of personnel for employment. (Civil service).</p> <p>-There are levels where standard English usage is not essential and does not influence work</p>		<p>-English chosen as the business language. Reality is that people we do business with judge a person's credentials by the way he expresses himself in English. (Insurance).</p> <p>-The person should at least be able to communicate with complainants (our work place). (Civil service).</p> <p>-All depends on position. (Public service).</p>	

<p>performance. e.g. production levels like cleaners. (Hospital).</p> <p>-The command of English is not indicative of one's capacity and wisdom. (Media).</p> <p>-Marketing. (Chain store).</p> <p>-As long as the applicants understands what he/she wants to do in a job. (Church).</p> <p>-Appoint and develop him/her. (Parastatal).</p> <p>-The more they are exposed to the language the more they will improve. (Bank).</p> <p>-English all over the world is different but understood. (Insurancel).</p>	
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6.5 CORRECTNESS AND PREFERENCES IN LANGUAGE USAGE

6.5.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF CORRECTNESS IN WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATION (SECTION B: QUESTIONS 1 & 2)

How important do you think correctness is in written and oral communication?

This item was measured on a 5-point scale, where point 1 represented "very important" and point 5 represented "less important" (cf. Appendix D). 83.3% of the respondents considered correctness in written communication very important, and 52% considered oral communication very important (cf. Table 13).

The results reveal that written correctness is regarded to be more important than oral correctness. The subjects seem to value good language usage in many respects (cf. 6.2.4 and 6.4.1). Correctly written application letters may therefore enhance an applicant's chances of employment.

Table 13: The importance of correctness in written and oral communication

	1		2		3		4		5		NR	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
Written	20	83.3	2	8.3	2	8.3	0	0	0	0	1	–
Oral	13	56.5	1	4.3	7	30.4	2	8.7	0	0	2	–

Key:

NR=No response

6.5.2 THE PREFERRED VARIETY OF ENGLISH AND THE VARIETY WIDELY USED IN SA (QUESTIONS 3 & 4)

Which variety of English do you prefer?

British English has traditionally been regarded as the model of English usage in South Africa. The results in Table 14 indicate that 52% of the respondents still regarded British English as the preferred one. Other research studies, for example, that of Van der Walt and Van Rooy (2001), reveal similar findings. These findings also correlate with the high regard of correctness in written communication by the subjects (cf. 6.5.1 above). This serves as additional evidence of employers' expectations as far as language usage is concerned. It seems that proficiency in English plays an influential role in most institutions of employment.

However, 12% of the respondents preferred African English and another 12% preferred Afrikaans English. This may probably indicate a recognition of an indigenous model, which may lead to the acceptance of language variation.

Which variety of English do you think is widely used in South Africa?

25% of the subjects felt that the African model was widely used in South Africa, while 16.6% of them chose the Afrikaans model (cf. Table 14). It seems that, although the British model is preferred, the subjects are aware of the common usage of African English in South Africa. The results also indicate that Afrikaans English is, to some degree, extensively used in South Africa.

Although 12.5% of the subjects chose the British model and another 12.5% the American model, the results point out that the African model is widely used.

Table 14: Preferred variety of English and variety widely used in South Africa

Language varieties	Variety of English preferred		Variety widely used in S.A.	
	Fr	%	Fr	%
American	2	8	3	12.5
African	3	12	6	25
British	13	52	3	12.5
Afrikaans	3	12	4	16.6
Indian	0	0	0	0
Other (SAE)	1	4	3	12.5
NR	0	–	1	–
All except Indian	1	4	0	0
British & Afrikaans	1	4	0	0
American & British	1	4	0	0
African, British & Afrikaans	0	0	1	4.2
African & Afrikaans	0	0	4	16.6

Key: NR = No response

6.6 ACCENT AS A FACTOR THAT INFLUENCES SELECTION FOR EMPLOYMENT

6.6.1 ACCEPTABILITY OF L2 SPEAKER'S ACCENT (QUESTION 5)

Do you regard the accent of a second language speaker of English as acceptable or unacceptable?

Almost all the respondents, 96%, indicated that the accent of a second language speaker was acceptable. Only 1 out the 25 respondents showed negativity towards the L2 speakers' accent (cf. Table 15). The results correlate with the respondents' willingness to employ a second language speaker of English (cf. 6.4.2).

It seems that the speakers' accent would not jeopardize their chances of employment.

Table 15: Accent of a L2 speaker of English

Acceptable		Unacceptable	
Fr	%	Fr	%
24	96	1	4

Key

Fr = Frequency

% = Percentage

6.6.2 INFLUENCE OF ACCENT AT INTERVIEWS (QUESTION 6)

Does accent influence you in some way when you conduct interviews/make selection for employment?

54.2% of the respondents were not influenced by the speaker's accent at interviews. Table 16 contains the results as well as the reasons the subjects provided. According to the respondents' reasons, work-related skills were of vital importance. This means that the employers were more concerned with productivity at work than the employees' accents.

29.2% of the subjects indicated that they were only sometimes influenced by the speaker's accent, and 16.6% were always influenced. This suggests that accent may influence getting a job sometimes, but not in the majority of the cases.

Table 16: Influence of accent at interviews

Yes		No		Sometimes		NR	
Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
4	16.6	13	54.2	7	29.2	1	–

Reasons for the influence of accent

Yes

- I have a great appreciation for somebody who learns a new language.
- When interviewing a person using a second language, people are stressed and tend to make mistakes.
- People with good accent are more likely to be considered for employment.

No

- Skills and competencies are of vital importance

Sometimes

- An accent which people could not hear will obviously affect the work flow, so depending on if I could be able to hear what the interviewee is saying, then it's okay. If not, then, too bad.
- The understanding of exact meaning.
- Staff dealing with the public need to speak well.
- Depending on the job you are interviewing for.
- Accent can influence one's understanding of what an interviewee is trying to put across.
- There are words that can be pronounced badly and make it difficult for the listener to understand.

Key:

Fr = Frequency

% = Percentage

NR= No response

6.6.3 PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH AS A PREREQUISITE FOR EMPLOYMENT (QUESTION 7)

Is proficiency a prerequisite for employment in your institution?

48% of the subjects felt that proficiency in English was "not quite" a prerequisite for employment (cf. Table 17). However, some of the reasons suggest that the level or position of employment would depend on the employee's level of proficiency in English. This shows a significant correlation between language proficiency and position of employment.

24% agreed that language proficiency was a prerequisite and 28% answered that it was not. This shows that proficiency may play a significant role in chances of employment in certain cases, and would determine the level of employment (cf. 6.4.1).

Table 17: Proficiency in English as a prerequisite for employment

Yes		No		Not Quite	
Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
6	24	7	28	12	48
Reasons Yes -It is important for an educated person to speak and write standard English. -Public place. No -All languages allowed. Not Quite -English is not the only language that is spoken. -Some of the jobs do not necessarily comprise communication as core entity. -Certain occupational groups do not require proficiency in English, e.g. cleaners, gardeners, laundry aides.					

- Depends on the department you will work in.
- A storeman need not be proficient in English.
- English is not for Africans and we also have 11 official languages in South Africa.
- Depending on the nature of the positions it's sometimes difficult to test the skills of the person prior to employment.

6.6.4 FREQUENCY OF ENGLISH USAGE AND MODELS USED AT THE WORKPLACE (QUESTIONS 8, 9 & 10)

How frequent is English used in your institution?

According to the data in Table 18, 68% of the subjects agreed that English was used very frequently at the workplace. This seems to confirm that English is the language of business and professions in South Africa (cf. chapter 2). One can conclude that one must have some proficiency in English before one can expect to get a job in most cases (cf. 6.4.1).

Table 18: Frequency of English use

1		2		3		4		5	
Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
17	68	5	20	1	4	1	4	1	4

Which model do you prefer for communication at work?

Table 19 indicates that 44% of the subjects preferred the British model for communication at work. Their response to this question reflects their preferred model of English (cf. 6.5.2). However, 16% of the subjects preferred Afrikaans English, 12% chose African English, while another 12% were comfortable with any model of English. This indicates some recognition of local varieties, also

some openness towards acceptance of these varieties. But it seems that the use of standard British English grammar would probably increase one's chances of employment.

Which model of English do your employees commonly use?

36% of the respondents indicated that the African model was commonly used by their employees. 20% of the respondents indicated the Afrikaans model, and only 4% chose the British model (cf. Table 19). The results correlate with the answers in section 6.5.2. It would seem that in practical terms, the African model dominates amongst employees.

Table 19: Model for communication at work and model commonly used

Language varieties	Model for communication at work		Model commonly used by employees	
	Fr	%	Fr	%
American	1	4	1	4
African	3	12	9	36
British	11	44	1	4
Afrikaans	4	16	5	20
Indian	0	0	0	0
Any model	3	12	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
All except Indian	0	0	2	8
British & African	0	0	3	12
American, British & Afrik	1	4	0	0
African, British & Afrikaans	0	0	0	0
African & Afrikaans	2	8	2	8

6.7 RE-STANDARDISATION AND THE STANDARD OF ENGLISH USAGE IN SA

6.7.1 ACCEPTANCE OF RE-STANDARDISATION (QUESTION 11)

Would you accept the re-standardisation of English in South Africa?

37.5% of the subjects indicated that they would accept the re-standardisation of English in South Africa (cf. Table 19). There is thus a clear indication that future changes in usage may be accepted. This impression is strengthened by the fact that 45.8% were "not sure", an indication of uncertainty about the future. They may accept changes in future. According to Van der Walt and Van Rooy (2001:5), South Africa is still in the "liberation phase", which marks a period of "norm shifting to the indigenised varieties of English". During this phase there is much uncertainty about future linguistic developments. This phase is normally succeeded by a phase "when a settled endonormative standard is adopted on the basis of the pragmatic concerns of the needs of language users". This implies the possibility of the acceptance of re-standardisation of the norm in South Africa.

Table 20: Acceptance of re-standardisation

Yes		No		Not sure		NR	
Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
9	37.5	4	16.7	11	45.8	1	–

Reasons for acceptance of re-standardisation

Yes

- It would make communications more accurate and we would have something own to South Africa.
- We could adopted our own South African English.
- Understandable by everyone.

No

- Not necessary.
- How do we decide which English should be standard.
- It is always inherent that people in various countries of the world speak English with an identity accent.
- I think for English to be just understandable in South Africa is enough. We still have our languages to communicate with.

Not Sure

- I'm not in favour of one language dominating the use of others. All languages should be treated equally and the same way.
- Are we upgrading or downgrading?
- It depends on the type of people one communicates with – older or younger. And again, it depends on the environment and necessity.

Key:

Fr = Frequency

% = Percentage

NR=No response

6.7.2 COMMENTS ON THE STANDARD OF ENGLISH USAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA (QUESTION 12)

Comment generally on the standard of English usage in South Africa.

78.3% of the subjects commented on the standard of English in South Africa (cf. Table 21). According to the comments, it seems that some of the subjects are satisfied with the usage of English. But there is an indication that they expect improvement because English is widely used at the workplace. This confirms their appreciation of correctness in oral and written communication (cf. 6.5.1). This implies that, in most cases, employment seekers should use correct language when they apply for jobs. One of the subjects clearly indicated the necessity of a good command of English, because English was the language of business.

The comments also show that there is an awareness of emerging varieties of English. One subject mentioned "the suburban and the political English used by black South Africans".

Table 21: General comments on the standard of English usage in SA

Comments

- It's quite okay though not used by everybody everywhere but I think we need to improve on that. We (SA citizens) need to use it often as it is most commonly used in other countries as well, so it is a medium of instruction amongst fellow citizens globally and locally.
- The English used in South Africa is more dependent on the level of education of a person as well as the nationality and race of a person.
- It is improving, given the level of communication instruments at the disposal of learners.
- English is used mostly by everyone.
- I think the last couple of years where English became more the medium of communication, it improved a lot meaning understanding of each improves.
- If TV and Radio broadcasters are setting the standard- heaven help us- in many instances they are impossible to understand and could be speaking a foreign language.
- On the whole poor, but there are numerous exceptions all the same. Many people in the country speak standard English. Regrettably, however, still many more can hardly communicate in English.
- English is of late most frequently used in South Africa with the coming of democracy and booming communications e.g. TV, radios, etc. Two classes are seemingly emerging: the suburban and the political English used by black South Africans.
- It is widely used and understood.
- People have gone to an extent of losing their identity. You get good treatment if you speak good English. There is an emerging trend of children brought up in schools that promotes English language- lots of children are fluent in English.
- Great improvement because of the media, newspapers and the integration in housing institutions.
- Communication in business is done through the English medium. Good command of English language is recommended.
- English usage in South Africa is influenced by English and Afrikaans speakers (white). Where the English people were ruling people in those areas speak better English and where Afrikaans speakers were ruling Afrikaans has influenced the way English is spoken.
- The standard of English usage in South Africa is not so good as compared to other African countries because of the type of education that South Africans had during the previous regime.
- It is usually good and understandable, but there can be improvement for better communication.
- Acceptable and developing.
- English is a complex and constantly changing language and many books have been written on style and its related topics of grammar and format.
- Majority of South Africans have different languages besides English as their first language and as long as this is the case the usage of English language will still be very broad and different.

6.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter was devoted to the discussion of the results of the survey. Notwithstanding the small scale on which the study was conducted, it managed,

to some extent, to portray the perceptions of employers from different institutions. The overall findings suggest that, since English is commonly used at the workplace, proficiency in English will assist applicants. The higher the applicant's proficiency, the higher his level of employment is likely to be.

According to the results, most of the subjects value correctness in written communication. Although the majority prefer the British model of English, they seem to agree that the African variety of English is frequently used in South Africa. The majority of the subjects were positive towards the employment of second language speakers of English, and they were also not influenced by the speakers' accents at interviews.

The survey revealed that BSAE is not a problem per se. Its structures are well known and comprehensible. It is also commonly used at the workplace. Considering the responses, there seems to be an openness towards the re-standardisation of English in future.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In view of the emergence and predominant usage of BSAE, this research study sought to investigate the employers' perceptions of the usage of BSAE at the workplace. The aims of this study were to determine:

- ◆ the perceptions of employers of applicants using a BSAE variant of English in writing.
- ◆ the employers' views on the standard of English that should be maintained in South Africa, and the reasons for these views.

7.2 CONCLUSION

The method of research was preceded by the literature survey which discussed different topics concerning the usage of English in South Africa.

- ◆ The domains of English discussed in chapter 2 indicate that English is widely used in South Africa. It plays an important role in most domains of language use. This implies that South African citizens should be proficient in English. The workplace and business sectors have always been dominated by English.
- ◆ The development of varieties of English worldwide and the concept of World Englishes were discussed. This discussion contributes towards an understanding of the varieties of English in South Africa. These varieties include BSAE, which has led to a major debate on language standards in South Africa.

- ◆ The discussion of perceptions of English in South Africa indicate that people have different views, feelings, preferences and expectations relating to English usage.

The findings of the study, which are not to be generalised, show that the majority of the respondents value the British model of English at the workplace. They also regard correctness in written communication highly.

According to the results, proficiency in English seems to be a requirement for employment in most institutions. There is an indication that most employers are familiar with BSAE usage. This is evident in their ability to identify the BSAE structures used by an applicant (cf. Appendix C and chapter 6, Table 6). The letter with BSAE structures is considered the least comprehensible in South Africa and internationally. However, there is an indication that BSAE users have opportunities of employment, although at lower levels (cf. 6.4.1).

The results reveal that the African model of English is widely used by employees at the workplace. BSAE seems to be gaining recognition as a variety of English in South Africa, and there is an indication that re-standardisation of English may be accepted in future.

The results of the study point to the need for the proper and intensive teaching of English at school level. School courses would benefit from a focus on Business English, in order to prepare learners for the workplace. It remains essential that teachers of English as a second language be properly trained for their task, both through initial and in-service training.

7.3 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research of this kind can be done in other regions to corroborate the findings of this study.

Research on BSAE and its usage at the workplace, focussing on employees themselves, can also be conducted.

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APPENDIX A

APPLICANT A

1211 Thomas Street
Potchefstroom
2780
11 June 2001

The Manager
XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX

Dear Sir

APPLICATION FOR A JOB

I wish to apply for the job of assistant to the General Manager, as advertised in The Star on 2 June 2001.

I am a young woman who has just finished his Business Communication degree on Potchefstroom University, specialising in Economics. I am also having a diploma in Production Management, which I received it at Pretoria Technikon. I think my qualifications are relevant to the position and I am the good administrator. I am a friendly somebody who likes to communicate with people.

I am planning to be a career woman and hope to run my own business one day. At the moment I am willing to start under and work myself up.

I am 23 years old, just finished with my degree. I love the administrative work, and will love to work in the well-organised office. This will be my first time job. It is difficult to get employment these nowadays, and I am determined to make a success of it.

I am having my matric certificate and my degree certificate. If you need the documents I can fax them to you. If I have to fill any forms, please send them to me.

I hope the informations I gave you is enough. My phone number where you can reach me for more informations is 055-966232.

A speedy response will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully
XXXXXXXXXX

APPENDIX B

APPLICANT B

1211 Thomas Street
Potchefstroom
2780
11 June 2001

The Manager
XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX

Dear Sir

APPLICATION FOR A JOB

I wish to apply for the job of assistant to the General Manager, as advertised in The Star on 2 June 2001.

I am a young woman who has just finished her Business Communication degree at Potchefstroom University, specialising in Economics. I also have a diploma in Production Management, which I received at Pretoria Technikon. I think my qualifications are relevant to the position and I am a good administrator. I am a friendly person who likes to communicate with people.

I am planning to be a career woman and I hope to run my own business one day. At the moment I am willing to start under and work myself up.

I am 23 years old, just finished with my degree. I love administrative work, and will love to work in a well-organised office. This will be my first job. It is difficult to get employment nowadays, and I am determined to make a success of it.

I have my matric certificate and my degree certificate. If you need the documents I can fax them to you. If I have to fill in any forms, please send them to me.

I hope the information I gave you is enough. My phone number where you can reach me for more information is 055-966232.

A speedy response will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully

L. Lebeso

APPENDIX C

APPLICANT C

Thomas Street 1121
Potchefstroom
2780
11 June 2001

The Manager
XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX

Dear Sir

APPLICATION FOR A JOB

I wish to apply for the job of assistant to the General Manager, as advertise in The Star of 2 June 2001.

I am a young woman who just finished her Business Communication degree at Potchefstroom University, specialising in Economics. I also have a diploma in Production Management, which I receive at Pretoria Technikon. I think my qualifications is relevant to the position and I am a good administrator. I am a friendly person who like to communicate with people.

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A speedy response will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully

J. Tlou

APPENDIX D

PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH USAGE : A SURVEY

Title : _____

Male/Female : _____

Age : _____

First Language : _____

Other Languages : _____

Qualifications : _____

Institutions where obtained: _____

Company attached to: _____

Position : _____

Kindly provide answers as requested.

SECTION A

Read letters A, B and C, and give answers to the following questions.

1. Which of the three letters do you regard as the most well-written?

A

B

C

Reason/s _____

2. Which of the three letters do you regard as the least well-written?

A

B

C

Reason/s _____

3. Which letter contains typical Black South African English (BSAE) features?

A

B

C

4. Provide one feature _____

5. How do you rate the three applicants in terms of language usage?

5.1. Applicant A : Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

Reason/s _____

5.2. Applicant B : Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

Reason/s _____

5.3. Applicant C : Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

Reason/s

6. How do you rate the letters in terms of comprehensibility?

A : Comprehensible	1	2	3	4	5	Incomprehensible
--------------------	---	---	---	---	---	------------------

B : Comprehensible	1	2	3	4	5	Incomprehensible
--------------------	---	---	---	---	---	------------------

C : Cornprehensible	1	2	3	4	5	Incomprehensible
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	------------------

7. Indicate which letter you think would be most comprehensible in South Africa.

A

B

C

All

None

8. Indicate which letter you think would be internationally most comprehensible.

A

B

C

All

None

9. For employment in your company, in which position and at what level would you employ

9.1. Applicant A? _____

9.2. Applicant B? _____

9.3. Applicant C? _____

10. Do you think a second language speaker of English who does not use standard English should be employed in your organisation?

Yes

No

Reason/s _____

SECTION B

1. How important do you think correctness is in written communication?

Very Important	1	2	3	4	5	Less Important
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

2. How important do you think correctness is in oral communication?

Very Important	1	2	3	4	5	Less Important
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

3. Which variety of English do you prefer?

American English

African English

British English

Afrikaans English

Indian English

Other (specify) _____

4. Which variety of English do you think is widely used in South Africa?

American English

African English

British English

Afrikaans English

Indian English

Other (specify) _____

5. Do you regard the accent of a second language speaker of English as

Acceptable?

Unacceptable?

6. Does accent influence you in some way when you conduct interviews/make selection for employment?

Yes

No

Sometimes

If so, for what reasons? _____

7. Is proficiency in English a prerequisite for employment in your institution?

Yes

No

Not Quite

Reason/s _____

8. How frequent is English used in your institution?

Very Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Infrequent
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	------------

9. Which model of English do you prefer for communication at work?

American English

African English

British English

Afrikaans English

Indian English

Any Model

10. Which model of English do your employees commonly use?

African English

American English

British English

Afrikaans English

Indian English

Other (specify)

11. Would you accept the re-standardisation of English in South Africa?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Reason/s

12. Comment generally on the standard of English usage in South Africa.

APPENDIX E

P. O. Box 63
Sovenga
0727
08 September 2001

The Human Resources Manager
XXXXXXXXX
Pietersburg
0700

Dear Sir/Madam

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE SURVEY OF ENGLISH

Please find enclosed a questionnaire which serves as an instrument to survey the perceptions, by employers, of English usage at the workplace in South Africa. The survey forms part of my research programme conducted at the University of Potchefstroom.

I sincerely hope that you will find time to respond to the questionnaire as soon as you can and have it ready for collection. The data will be dealt with confidentially, and you will be informed of the findings in due course.

Your participation in this study is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

H. N. Tlaka
(Researcher)

Prof. J. L. van der Walt
(Supervisor)

Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education