# SOME CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISHES IN LESOTHO, MALAWI AND SWAZILAND

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*This article discusses the function of the English and the local form it takes in three Southern African countries, namely Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland. English was introduced in these countries as a result of contacts between the indigenous people and British traders and missionaries during the 19th century. English, which had initially been the language of trade, became the official language in colonial administration. Since then, English has had shifting but always important roles alongside the indigenous languages. As usually happens with languages in contact, there has been a fair amount of mutual influence. In this article, we examine some of the changes in English, concentrating on the usage of non-L1 speakers. Kachru (1982) speaks of this process as 'indigenisation': changing the language to suit the communicative needs of non-native users in new, un-English contexts. That explanation is only partly satisfactory. Languages influence one another in sophisticated sociolinguistic ways that require more penetrating analysis. In this article, we are concerned mainly with examining and describing the transfer of syntactic, phonological, lexical and semantic features from indigenous languages into English. From observation, most of the Africanisms that apply in the three countries discussed, particularly in Malawi, could well apply to Zambia and Zimbabwe as well. Finally, we reflect on some future possibilities.*

## BACKGROUND

We have chosen to write on English in Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi because of our intimate, first-hand experience of those countries. One of us has lived and worked in Swaziland, and the other has lived and worked in both Malawi and Swaziland. In addition, we have undertaken substantial research in Lesotho. Some extent to Zimbabwe as well. Some account of the demography and history of these countries follows. All three are relatively small, landlocked countries, with influences from across their borders. All three have strong links with South Africa through the migratory labour system. And in all three English has the most prominent position in education and is given high status in public life. When it comes to the African languages, Lesotho and Swaziland are effectively monolingual, monocultural states, whereas Malawi is multilingual and multicultural.

### Lesotho

Formerly known as Basutoland, Lesotho became a British protectorate in 1868 at the request of its chief, who feared that the South African Boer population might take it over. It was annexed to the Cape Colony in 1871, became a separate British colony in 1884, and after almost a

century under British rule, it became an independent state on 4 October 1966. The Kingdom has an estimated population of 2.09m people, of whom the overwhelming majority are speakers of SeSotho. It is a constitutional monarchy. SeSotho is an official language alongside English. It is also an official language in neighbouring South Africa.

The first contacts with missionaries in Lesotho took place in 1833, when missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society settled in the Kingdom (Ellenberger, 1969; Mohasi, 1995). Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries followed. These three Christian missions established schools, churches and printing presses, and have had a large hand in achieving the high literacy rate in the Kingdom. Lesotho has one of the highest literacy levels in Africa: approximately 30%.

## Swaziland

Swaziland became a British territory following the Anglo-Boer war in 1903 and obtained independence from Britain on 6 September 1968. Its Constitution vests supreme executive and legislative powers in the hereditary King (Ngwenyama – the Lion). Traditional law and custom govern succession. The overwhelming majority of the population speak siSwati, which is an official language alongside English. SiSwati is also an official language in neighbouring South Africa.

Missionary contact was early. Two Wesleyans, James Allison and Richard Giddy, visited the Kingdom at King Mswati I's invitation in 1844 (Booth, 1983). A year later the Wesleyans established a station in the South of the country. Thirty four years later, in 1879, the Anglicans established a mission station, and others followed. The missionaries have played an important part in educational work in the Kingdom. By 1961, in the run-up to independence, over three-quarters of the schools in the country were run by missionary societies (Malan, 1985).

## Malawi

Formerly known as Nyasaland, Malawi is one of the most densely populated countries in Southern Africa, with a current estimated population of about 7 988 million. Malawi became a British Protectorate in 1891, following the work of Scottish missionaries and British traders as forerunners of British administration. In 1953 it formed part of the Central African Federation, which included Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia, and Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Nyasaland became independent and was renamed Malawi on 6 July 1964. Unlike Lesotho and Swaziland, Malawi is a multilingual state with between 8 and 14 indigenous languages being spoken within its borders, depending on how one defines a language (see Kishindo, 1994). Official recognition is given to English and six indigenous languages, namely ciCewa, ciYao, ciLomwe, ciTumbuka, ciSena, and ciTonga. CiCewa is the most widely spoken language.

Contacts with missionaries were firmly established in the late 19th century, that is, much later than in Lesotho and Swaziland. The first missionaries began work in Malawi in response to David Livingstone's pleas (Crosby, 1993). The Church of Scotland (1876) was first, followed twenty years later by the Dutch Reformed Church (1896), then the Anglican Church (1899), and the Roman Catholic Church in the early 20th century. All the missions used the major indigenous languages of the time, for education. CiCewa or ciNyanja (two labels for the same language) and ciTumbuka, were used alongside English to provide education and literacy to their converts, particularly so that they could read and teach the Bible.

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## *Education policy*

Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland all have language policies that accord official recognition to English and at least one indigenous language: seSotho for Lesotho, siSwati for Swaziland, and six indigenous languages including ciCewa for Malawi. In each case, however, English has a higher status, especially in formal contexts, and is used as the main medium of instruction from grade 3 upward in Swaziland, from grade 5 in Malawi and from grade 7 in Lesotho. In lower grades, the indigenous languages, siSwati, ciCewa and seSotho respectively, are used as media of instruction, while English is taught as a subject.

In all three countries primary education normally begins at six years of age and lasts seven years. Secondary education begins at 13 years of age and lasts five years, comprising a first cycle of three years and a second of two. Education is not compulsory in Malawi and Swaziland, but in Lesotho primary education is compulsory and is provided free of charge by the main Christian missions.

## *The role of English in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland*

English has been significant side by side with the indigenous languages of the three countries under discussion since its introduction in the nineteenth century. It is mainly used as the language of government and administration, education, diplomacy and international business transactions. The indigenous languages, on the other hand, chiefly serve for daily communication, including in the great majority of lower-income occupations, and as vehicles for transmission of indigenous tradition and culture from generation to generation. These languages are so widespread that there is no need for English beyond the confines of the classroom and higher-level formal functions. Certain features of the colloquial Englishes spoken in the three countries under consideration are discussed in more detail below, with a focus on phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics. The local elements in the language appear more or less frequently depending on the degree of formality or social elevation that applies, or the deliberate affirmation of local identity. Current trends are also examined in a venture to speculate on the future of the language in these countries.

## RESEARCH ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN ENGLISHES

There has been relatively little research on the varieties of English spoken in Lesotho and Malawi. However, Kamwangamalu and Chisanga (1996) and Arua (1998) have done some research in Swaziland. According to Arua (1998: 139), the paucity of studies of English in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland stems from the assumption that the discussions of English in South Africa, especially South African Black English, encompass other Southern African countries. See, for example, Magura (1985). Our work on English in Malawi, Lesotho and Swaziland confirms the validity of this assumption. The varieties of English spoken in these countries seem indeed to have much in common, both in form and function, with South African Black English (Buthelezi, 1995), although the latter has been very tentatively described. This similarity is not surprising, since the people of Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa and Swaziland not only speak Bantu languages and have a similar colonial history, but also interact with one another frequently while working or visiting family and friends across their countries' borders. Besides, seSotho and siSwati are spoken and co-exist with English not only in Lesotho and Swaziland, but also in the Republic of South Africa, where they have the status of official languages. Kachru (1982) speaks of the ‚indigenization' of English to suit the communicative

needs of its non-native English users. To some extent that applies here, but the process is rarely driven by such an agenda. Transfer is largely unconscious, particularly among non-native speakers. Other sociolinguistic phenomena such as borrowing are also evident. These are also quite common among native English speakers in these contexts as can be seen in the Oxford *Dictionary of South African English*. The changes to English manifest mainly in a transfer and borrowing of syntactic, phonological, lexical and semantic features from the indigenous languages into English. In this study, most of the data used to illustrate these features were collected from local newspapers and from students' essays. Unless indicated otherwise, the features of English discussed below obtain in all the colloquial varieties of English spoken in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland, much as they do in other non-native varieties of English spoken in the region, e.g., Botswana English (Letsholo, 1996), Zimbabwean English (Magura, 1985), and South African Black English (Magura, 1985; Buthelezi, 1995).

## PHONOLOGY

The Englishes of Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland (hereafter referred to as LMS Englishes) are characterised, among other things, by stress placement, consonant substitution, consonant cluster simplification, metathesis, vowel shortening and vowel epenthesis.

*Stress Placement*

In polysyllabic words, stress tends to shift to the final syllable. This stress pattern is particularly noticeable with verbs, as shown in the right-hand column. For nouns, stress tends to be less regular. In the case of some nouns stress is placed on the second syllable, as in *main'tenance*; while for others it is placed on the last syllable: *orga'nism, circums 'tance*.

| Standard stress points | Local stress points |
|---|---|
| *De'termine* | *dete'mine [d i te: m a i n]* |
| *Com'municate* | *communi'cate* |
| *Ad'ministrate* | *adminis' trate* |
| *'nationalize* | *nationa 'lize* |
| *'propagate* | *propa 'gate* |
| *ap 'preciate* | appre'ciate |
| *'comment* | *com 'ment* |
| *in 'toxicate* | intoxi'cate |

*Consonant substitution*

Of the consonants that are often substituted for others in LMS Englishes, the following may be noted.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [θ] | -----> [t] | e.g. <u>th</u>ing | ----> [<u>t</u>ing] |
| [ð] | -----> [d] | e.g. <u>th</u>is | ----> [<u>d</u>is] |
| [r] | -----> [l] | e.g. f<u>r</u>om | ----> [f<u>l</u>om] |

It seems that the sounds on the left, are substituted for the corresponding sounds on the right since the former do not exist in the indigenous languages. In regard to the sound [r], some Bantu languages, e.g. siSwati, do not inherently have this sound in their phonological systems. The

occasional presence of [r] in siSwati and related Bantu languages such as isiZulu, isiXhosa and isiNdebele is thus a result of phonological borrowing from English.

Consonant cluster simplification
As in other non-native varieties of English spoken in the region, in LMS Englishes consonant cluster simplification tends to occur word-finally, as shown in the following examples.

1.  *He pass(ed) the tes(t) yesterday.*
2.  *They aks(ed) me.*

Here, lexical items such as *asks* are usually metathesized and rendered as aks, while *test* and *passed* are rendered as *tes* and *pass*, respectively. Consonant cluster simplification and metathesis are not unique to the varieties of English under study.  We could observe here that most speakers of siLozi in Zambia have difficulty with ‚tests' for example. They simplify this by vowel insertion> / testiz/. (Miti, 2003). These features are also common in West African English, particularly Nigerian English (Bamgbose, 1992), and are even found in varieties of native English in the UK.

*Vowel shortening*

One of the features that distinguish English from Bantu languages is the vowel system.  English has twelve vowels including long and short vowels, while most Bantu languages including siSwati and ciCewa have a five-vowel system.  Consequently, unlike native speakers of English, speakers of LMS Englishes tend not to distinguish between the various types of English vowels, irrespective of their heights.  Sometimes long vowels and diphthongs are shortened, while short vowels are lengthened.  Thus, the words in the left-hand column below, for instance, are rendered as in the middle column; while the minimal pairs in the right-hand column are treated as homophonous.  It is therefore not unusual to hear people say *'I will travel by sheep from Karonga to Monkey Bay'*. Likewise, words such as *bad, bud, and barred* sound almost the same, just as do *hat, hut, hurt and heart.*

| Standard  Pronunciation | Local Pronunciation | Minimal pairs |
|---|---|---|
| *take*  [teik] | -----> [tek] | *leap/lip* |
| *cake*  [keik] | -----> [kek] | *deep/dip* |
| *car*  [ka: ] | -----> [ka] | *sheep/ship* |
| *here*  [həie] | -----> [hi] | *seek/sick* |
| *there*  [ðɛ: ] | -----> [dɛ] | *leave/live* |
| *work*  [wə:k] | -----> [wɛk] | *peel/pill* |

**VOCABULARY**

The fact that English has co-existed for more than a hundred years with local languages in the countries under discussion has naturally led to what Haugen (1972) terms 'mutual contagion' in both directions.  Here, we shall focus on the lexical contagion from local languages into LMS Englishes as well as on internal developments in these Englishes.

### *Cultural transfer*

The LMS Englishes have, each in their context, borrowed cultural vocabulary items from local languages, especially in the areas of cultural ceremonies, local foods and sociopolitical structure, to list a few. Some of the cultural vocabulary items commonly found in the local English dailies, include those that are listed below. However, it is important to note that although an attempt is made to translate these items into English, the translation does not provide all the shades of meanings that the items might have in the source languages. Unless indicated otherwise, the items presented below are taken from Swaziland English.

*Cultural ceremonies*

| | |
|---|---|
| *incwala* | ‚the feast of eating the first fruit' |
| *umhlanga* | ‚reed dance' |
| *(li) khubalo* | ‚traditional fetish against adultery' |
| *inyanga* (sing) | ‚traditional healer' |
| *tinyanga* (pl) | ‚traditional healers' |
| *lishende* | ‚culprit, cheat' |
| *makhathakhatha* | ‚traditional fetish to counter "khubalo"' |

3.  This *khubalo* husband was smart. However, *tinyanga* say there is a way out of this. If the woman suspects that the man has put *likhubalo* in her and warns the *lishende* or mouse in time, there are certain *makhathakhatha* he can take to defend himself and go ahead with love making. (*Times of Swaziland* (*TOS*), 8 December 1992).

4.  Senior medical store officers are believed to have procured drugs for hospitals through *katangale*.
    *(katangale* (from Malawian English): ‚shady deals designed to benefit the parties involved')

5.  His Excellency, the life-President Dr H. Banda will be entertained by the *mbumba* before he addresses the gathering at the rally.
    *(Mbumb* ‚gyrating maidens who flanked and danced for the late life-president Kamuzu Banda of Malawi')

*Local foods*

Names of local foods and drinks are not translated into English, but keep the form they have in indigenous languages. Examples include *mahewu, buganu, jamtane, simona* (names of local drinks), *umkhumladjezi* (locally-brewed spirit, also known as ‚knock-out' because of its high alchohol level), *nkosingithathe* (a locally-brewed spirit, also known as ‚take-me-lord' because it can kill if taken in a large quantity), *ligugu* (corn meal). *Phuthu*, in Zulu is also known as *sima* in ciTumbuka and *nsim*a in ciCewa, but now also common as *nsima* in Malawian English).

*Socio-political structure*

Like the names of local foods and drinks, items that denote a society's socio-political structure are not translated into English, even if an English equivalent exists. In Swazi English, some such items include the following: *indlovokadzi* (Her Majesty the Queen), *makosikati* (King's wives), *inyanga* [also *sing'anga* in Malawian English] (traditional healer), *impi* (King's warriors), *libandla* (traditional court), *indvuna* (traditional chief), *labadzala* (community elders), *sangoma* (witch hunter), *indaba* (serious discussion involving community leaders), and *sigeja* (a

traditional outfit). Similar terms are found in South African Black English, especially in the variety spoken by the Zulus, whose language, isiZulu, is closely related to siSwati. Additional examples follow.

6. When you *lamuta* or are *lamuting* you don't have to ask for consent, as *sibali* (the wife's sister) is assumed to be your wife as well. (*TOS*, 6 Jan 1994)
   (*kulamuta*: ‚a practice where a man believes that he has a right to have sexual intercourse with his wife's younger sisters')

7. *Example*: Women don't like to be *ngenaed* at all. They prefer to go their own way. (*TOS*, Jan 6, 1994)
   (*ngena*: ‚marry a widow (without the latter's consent) to her late husband's brother')

8. If a woman's brother loses weight, then she says that her brother's *makoti* is not treating him well. If the *makoti* should be seen wearing a lovely dress then she spends all their brother's money on clothes. That's why *bhuti* (the woman's brother) does not give us money. (*The Swazi Observer* (*SOB*), 8 February 1994).
   (*makoti*: 'newly-wed wife')

*South Africanisms*

In LMS Englishes there are what Schmied (1996: 311) terms South Africanisms, that is, items borrowed from South African languages, particularly South African Black English, South African White English and Afrikaans. Examples include the following from Afrikaans into Lesotho English: *sekam* (an afro comb), *roko* (a dress), *baas* (boss), *lekker* (nice), *braai* (barbecue). Other South Africanisms found in LMS Englishes include *mealies-mealies* (corn starch), *dagga* (cannabis – *dagga,* a word used in SAE and Afrikaans, is itself a borrowing from indigenous Khoikhoi *dachab,* and SAE often borrows *insangu* from isiZulu or *intsangu* from isiXhosa), *robots* (traffic lights), *bottle store* (liquor store), *matchbox* (shack or small dwelling unit).

## Hybridization

This is a process whereby Bantu language free forms combine with English bound morphemes, especially *-ed*, *-ism*, to produce lexical items which are sometimes referred to as ‚bicodal words' i.e. words consisting of morphemes from two languages. Two types of hybridization can be distinguished: verb hybridization and noun hybridization. Verb hybridisation does not involve any Bantu language nominals but Bantu language verb stems, e.g. *nika* ‚give' and nouns such as *mlungu* ‚a white person'

*Verb hybridization*

This is one of the most productive processes of word formation, particularly in Swaziland English. Almost any siSwati verb can be turned into an English verb by suffixing the English bound morpheme <u>-ed</u> or <u>-ing</u> to a siSwati infinitive verb. Examples follow.

| | |
|---|---|
| *juma/ed/ing* | ‚visit one's girl friend or boyfriend' |
| *nika/(r)/ed/ing* | ‚give something to someone' |
| *pheka(r)/ed/ing* | ‚cook' |
| *pakhela/ed/ing* | ‚employ' |
| *bulala/ed/r-ing* | ‚promote someone, not on merit' |
| *beka/ed* | ‚put someone somewhere' |

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| | |
|---|---|
| *teka/ed* | „smear with red ochre' |
| *vusela/ed* | „register to vote' |
| *sisa/ed* | „have one's cattle looked after  by a neighbour' |
| *lobola/ed* | „pay lobola= brideprice' |
| *banju/ed* | „catch someone red-handed' |
| *khipha/ed* | „take into possession' |
| *loya/ed* | „bewitch' |
| *khileya/ed* | „lock in' |
| *bonga/ed* | „praise' |
| *khonta(r)/ed/ing* | „seek refuge/ a piece of land from a chief and settle on the land with the chief's permission' |
| *Mamba/ed/ r-ize* | „monopoly of something by the descendents of the Mamba tribe'. |

9.  The family has been living in the area since 1947 when they *khontaed* from the lateVelezizweni chief, Prince Sifuba.  The area in question has been given town status, hence the eviction order. (*TOS*, 30 December 1993).

Where any of the above verbs is passivized, speakers affix the Bantu passive marker -w- to the verb root, followed by the Bantu final vowel *-a* and the English inflectional suffix *-ed*.  This results in passive forms such as *bula-w-a-ed* (be promoted), *khiley-w-a-ed* (be locked in), banj-*w-a-ed* (be caught), *bong-w-a-ed* (be commended for one's work). It is noteworthy that for some of the verbs involved in the process under consideration, such as *khonta, bulala, phakela, khuluma*, and *nika*, the sound *r* is usually added onto the verb ending before the suffixation of the morpheme *-ed* or *-ing* (but this does not appear to be the case for passive forms) as illustrated in the following extract from a newspaper article about democracy in Swaziland.  The article concerns the election of a former Prime Minister as a Member of Parliament.

10. This proves that there is room for *bulalaring* (promoting him, the former Prime Minister, not on merit) so long as the base is wide and democratic, just like the members of the House of Assembly have done.  In fact, pound for pound, the more aesthetic list in this Parliament is the *bulala* list (the one with names of people to be promoted) from the Members themselves. (*SOB*, October 30, 1993)

*Noun hybridization*

This is a lexical derivation process whereby a Bantu noun is suffixed with the English morpheme *-ism*, as illustrated in examples 1 and 2 from Swazi English.  Note that, in this variety, the morpheme *-ism* has two meanings: „behave like X' (see ex. 2) and „suffer the same fate as X' (see example 1).

11. If somebody does not come to our rescue soon we should not be blamed if *Mbayiyanism* takes place.  (*TOS*, 13 Dec 1992) (In this case, it means „if the person suffers the same fate as Mbayiyane. See further discussion below.).

12. Swazis have now lost respect for their chiefs because they are now half *mlungu* [white] and half Swazi.  The only problem is this satanic half *mlunguism* [whiteman-like behaviour] and half Swaziism [Swazi-like behaviour] is us. We are now losing our heritage because we are emulating foreign customs and despising ours. (*TOS*, 13 December 1992)

The process of hybridization described here is very similar to lexical derivation in native Englishes. Consider, for instance, the lexical form *mbayiyanism* (lynching). This noun was coined following the lynching of someone named *Mbayiyane*, whom the mob accused of killing a young girl for ritual purposes. The following common lexical items have been derived from Mbayiyane's name: *mbayiyanism, mbayiyanization,* and *mbayiyanize.* Analogously, Anne H Soukhanov of the *Guardian Weekly* (January 7-13, 1994) describes lexical items derived from the name of a convicted murderer, Willie Horton, who committed another murder while on parole. She reports that the term *Willie Horton* has come to mean a person, group or entity reviled and regarded as a threat [to the community]. It has led to other forms such as *Willie Hortonize* and *Willie Hortonesque.* This suggests that lexical derivation in Swazi and other local Englishes evolves in a fashion similar to that found in other Englishes, including native Englishes.

### Other lexical transfer

Finally, in LMS Englishes no distinction is made between the verbs *to lend* and *to borrow*. This is because indigenous languages have only one word for both verbs: *bweleka* (in ciCewa, and *bwereka* in Citumbuka), *boleka* (in siSwati and isiZulu), and *adima* (in seSotho). Consequently, one often comes across sentences such as the following:

13. Can you *borrow* me your pen? (lend)
14. I can *borrow* you my pencil. (lend)
15. Please *borrow* me some money (lend).
16. Why did you *borrow* him so much money? (lend)

The verb *to lend* is rarely used in the colloquial varieties of the Englishes under consideration.

A similar example is that in ciNsenga, spoken in Malawi and Zambia, the item *mailo* refers to both tomorrow and yesterday (Miti, 2003).

## SYNTAX

Like other levels of linguistic structures, the syntax of LMS Englishes is affected in many ways by the syntactical features of indigenous languages. Some of the most salient features of these Englishes are: subject copying, indiscriminate use of gender, overgeneralization of the -<u>ing</u> form, and placement of a question word sentence-finally.

### Subject copying

In Bantu languages in general, and in the indigenous languages spoken in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland in particular, a subject noun phrase must agree with the verb by means of an agreement prefix. This feature, which corresponds to a subject pronoun in English, is carried over into the LMS Englishes, as illustrated below.

17. Sipho *he* is going to town.
18. These people *they* cheat a lot.
19. Children these days *they* misbehave.

## Question formation

The following structures illustrate a general pattern of question formation in LMS Englishes, especially the spoken varieties. The pattern shows that the question word is kept in *situ* in conformity with the syntactic structures of the indigenous Bantu languages.

20. People are *how*?
21. You want to go with *who*?
22. You are leaving *when*?
23. You are going *where*?

Note that similar structures do occur in native Englishes, but only as echo-questions (e.g. A: *I am leaving tomorrow*. B: *You are leaving when*?).

## Overgeneralization of the -ing form

Here, the progressive form is often extended to stative verbs, as shown below.

24. He goes about condemning corrupt practices when his own back yard *is stinking* (Schmied 1996: 312).
25. I *am loving* this person. (I love this person).
26. She *is having* a problem. (She has a problem).
27. They *are having* an examination. (They have an examination)
28. I *am having* a new friend, Nkosi. (I have a new friend, Nkosi)
29. This *is stemming* from lack of news judgement. (This stems from...)
30. You *are having* my dictionary. Please keep it safely. (You have my ..)

## Number and Gender

In LMS Englishes there is a tendency not to distinguish between the pronouns *he* and *she*, nor to inflect verbs for the third person singular. This is because Bantu languages, which mark the syntax of LMS Englishes, do not have these features. For both the pronouns *he* and *she*, siSwati has the single word *yena* and similarly ciCewa has *iyeyo* TM . For the third person verb prefix, siSwati has an undifferentiated *u-* and ciCewa *i-* (Correct, I think. TM) depending on other factors than person. So, for example, in the structures *Yena u-hambile* [siSwati] and *U-a-pita* [ciCewa] (he/she has gone), *yena* and *u-* can refer either to a man or to a woman. This feature is carried over into LMS Englishes, as can be seen in the following sentences, where *she* and *her* refer to masculine nouns, *my father* and *the man*, respectively.

31. My father is going to the States and *she* will come back next year.
32. The man stays (lives) with a girl who is not *her* wife.

Number is sometimes marked where it is not needed, and vice versa, as illustrated below.

33. Otherwise, why is the President (of Malawi) and his ministers waste (sic!) their time preaching what they do not practise. (Schmied 1996: 312)
34. My feets hurt.

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## Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs, such as *apply to/for*, *look for*, *look after*, are commonly used without their respective particles; while ordinary verbs such as *reverse, return, seek, request* and *discuss* are often used with a particle, e.g., *back*, *for* and *about*.  Thus, in LMS Englishes it is not unusual to hear structures such as the following:

35. I'm *looking*  Bongani
36. We *discussed about* the performance of the team in the World Cup.
37. The farmer *requested for* more money at the bank to buy cattle.

Platt et al (1984) observe that such usage may be influenced by verbs such as „talk' and „ask''which take the preposition „about' and „for'.

## Adjectives and adverbs

In the Englishes under study, there seems to be no distinction between some pairs of adjectives, such as *long* and *tall*, *alone* and *single*, *good* and *well*, as illustrated below. It seems that in these cases one word doubles for the other as a rule in ways which mark LMS Englishes as different from SAE or the international standard.  The boundaries of tolerance in LMS practice are such, however, that, for example, a tall person is sometimes called a long person. Again, this is because in most Bantu languages no distinction is made between these two adjectives, *long* and *tall*.  In siSwati, for instance, there is only one term, *lomudze*, for both adjectives.  Other expressions that are likely to be found in this category include the following: a *sour* person (an unfriendly person), and *hurry up slowly* (hurry a bit). It should be explained, however, that in the case of „slowly' and „a bit' the languages do make a distinction between these two. Slowly relates to movement, whereas „a bit' does not.

38. When I met her she told me she was *alone* (i.e. single).  Now I've discovered that she is a married woman.
39. Listen here my friend and listen *good*, we Swazi want peace and stability in this country (*TOS*, 17 November 1992).

The expression „listen good' may also be  influenced by American usage  in movies.

## SEMANTICS

## Meaning extension

In this area, some terms are assigned new meanings in addition to their original meaning.  The sentences below from Malawian English are illustrative.  They show that the verb *to move* has acquired new meanings, namely *to date* and *to be associated/socialize with*.  Similarly, the verbs *to escort* and *to bounce* do not necessarily have to do with security and bank cheques, but rather mean *to accompany* and *not to find*, respectively, as can be seen from the following structures.

40. Suzgo is *moving with* my cousin (i.e. dating).
41. He is *moving with* bad boys (i.e. socializing)(perhaps from native English: „moving in the right circles')

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42. Will you please *escort* me to town (i.e. accompany).
43. We went to look for you and *bounced* (i.e. we didn't find you).
44. I *bounced* at your room (i.e. I went to your room but you weren't there).

Other examples where meanings have been extended to suit the communicative needs of the users of LMS Englishes include *girlfriend* (a girl who is both a friend and necessarily a lover ), *genuine* person (a person with good reputation), *madam* (wife [Malawian English] or white female employer [South African English]).  For instance, in Malawian English people often say: I saw *your madam* (i.e. wife) in town).  Kinship terms also have extended meanings in LMS Englishes: *young-father* (father's younger brother), *elder father* (father's elder brother), *brother/sister* (any black African male/female, not necessarily a sibling).

### *Idiomatic expressions*

This is an area where LMS Englishes have developed a particular flavour of expressiveness. Here are a few examples. Further work will have to be done before confident conclusions can be made about their precise derivation.

45. This therefore is an *outcry* that Malawi should not be denied the opportunity for training.
46 Despite these revelations of disgusting poverty some politicians are out to *skin* the country *out of* its resources local or otherwise (Schmied 1996: 313).
47. *To see once is to see twice*[1].
    (Once bitten twice shy)
48. The man has *the liver of a crocodile*[2].
    (The man is brave)
49. Hey, sister in a red beret, *make yourself a person*.
    (This is often used by bus conductors to ensure that every passenger pays the bus fare)
50. The Swazi nation *put a blanket in their mouth* for a month.
    (The Swazi nation mourned for a month)
51.  Let me *keep quiet to be a human being*.
    (Silence is golden)
53. The money has been *eaten by the mice*.
    (Corrupt officials have squandered the money)

## CURRENT TRENDS

English is not the lingua franca of ordinary people in any of the three countries in question. Most citizens generally communicate in indigenous languages.  However, due to its prestige and higher social status both locally and internationally, English has a strong appeal. Mohasi (1995:93) notes, for instance, that despite the fact that both SeSotho and English were both declared official languages in Lesotho in 1966, most official documents are still written in English only. These include the country's Constitution, standard application forms and court documents.  Generally parents want their children to be educated at an English-medium school because of the perceived career benefits English appears to offer. Currently, the authorities in all three countries offer education through the medium of English.

There is some ambiguity, however. In Swaziland, for instance, a 1986 policy document issued by the Minister of Education states that:

> Time has come now for siSwati to be accorded a bread-winning status. While it makes sense to insist on the ability to read, write and speak English well for those students proceeding with education up to the University and teacher training levels, it is not clear why pupils who are leaving school at Junior certificate and below should be failed in English as those are likely to take up hand-skills employment. . . If such pupils are failed for not obtaining a good pass in siSwati, that would make more sense (Swaziland Ministry of Education, 1986: 24).

This statement sums up the current language situation in Swaziland: English is a ‚bread-winner' in the sense of being the key to economic mobility while siSwati, though a *lingua franca* in the Kingdom, does not carry such bread-winning status (Kamwangamalu and Chisanga, 1996: 290). Kunene (1997) describes siSwati and English as ‚two official languages of unequal status' (a description that may be applied to language situations in other Southern African countries, including Lesotho and Malawi). What Kunene means by ‚unequal status' is that particular prestige is attached to English even though English and siSwati are both legally classified as official languages. It must be conceded, however, that transactions such as banking transactions, cannot entirely be conducted in siSwati among Swazis and a state president can also decide to address an entire audience, which includes diplomats who are not conversant with the other official language, in siSwati. A different case pertains in Malawi. All high functions are conducted through English, for instance in parliament which has never used any indigenous Malawian language. This is true of both Banda's rule as well as Muluzi's. English thus seems in this country to transcend mere communication purposes, hence many view it as essential for their career survival.

In Malawi, in March 1996, a new language policy was introduced, on paper at least, advocating mother tongue instruction from grade 1 to grade 6. It is argued that the policy has not been implemented due to financial constraints. There is indeed a prohibitive cost involved in the training of teachers and in the codifying and printing of grammar books, dictionaries and other teaching materials in all the indigenous languages. However, apart from this and despite arguments on the cognitive advantages of mother tongue education, it would seem that significant numbers of Malawians believe that a child taught in English will learn better than a child taught in the mother tongue (*The Nation*, 24 May 1996).

In Lesotho, concern is periodically expressed at the perceived decline in education standards which some attribute to the seeming lack, among both students and teachers, of communicative competence in English. Motsoso (1995: 75) notes that ‚acquisition of content in specialised subjects is dependent upon the mastery of the language through which the subjects are taught'. Bearing this in mind, he and other language planners (e.g. Matsela, 1995) wonder whether the mother tongue language, seSotho, should not replace English as the medium of instruction. This prospect seems unlikely to materialise, given the international status of English and the role that it plays in the public life of the country.

In a nutshell, current trends in language use in the three countries under study suggest that the relationship between English and the indigenous languages will continue to be dynamic, if asymmetrical, for many years to come.

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## REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION

The varieties of English spoken in southern Africa, including those discussed in this article, have many common features, in terms of both form and function.

In terms of form, LMS Englishes and other non-native Englishes spoken in Southern Africa are marked at all levels of linguistic structure, including syntax, semantics, phonology and the lexicon, by the influence of indigenous languages. With the end of apartheid and the resultant free movement of people from and into South Africa, it is possible that the Englishes of Southern Africa will become increasingly similar. Earlier studies of English in Southern Africa have alluded to this possibility. Magura (1985: 251) uses the term *Southern African Black English* but with reference only to the Republic of South Africa and Zimbabwe, while Chishimba (1991) uses it to refer only to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa. A wider perspective may be useful. Whether a ‚global' regional variety of English, *Southern African English,* will consolidate and be standardised remains to be seen. Language development is subject to so many variables that it is unwise to speculate.

In regard to function, it seems likely that English will continue to continue to be the main language used in the domains of administration, education and diplomacy, in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland, and to mark its speakers as educated, modern, and perhaps affluent. Because of its ‚bread-winner' status in these countries, it is also probable that there will be increasing popular demand for English. However, the difficulties of providing adequate English-medium education may well make a high level of proficiency in the standard forms of the language accessible only to a selected few.

This article draws on separate and relatively small-scale pieces of research on some of the Englishes of Southern Africa and attempts to suggest some common features. More inclusive research, which looks into the structural and sociolinguistic features of all the Englishes of Southern Africa, is an exciting prospect in a region undergoing rapid and dynamic change.

## END NOTES

[1,2] It has been suggested that these relate closely to literal English translations of isiXhosa expressions.

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