

## Assessing representations of South African Indian English in writing: An application of variation theory

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines three representations of South African Indian English in print: *The Adventures of Applesammy and Naidoo* (1946) by Ray Rich; *The Lahnee's Pleasure* (c. 1972) by Ronnie Govender; and *The Wedding* (2001) by Imraan Coovadia. The use of dialect is a defining feature of all three texts. I show that the tools provided by variation theory are particularly useful in the analysis of literature that uses direct speech to portray characters and types. In particular, the principles of variation theory can be used to: (a) reveal the nature of stereotyping in the first text (a parody), which relies on the suppression of variation, and the generalization of linguistic and social characteristics; (b) evaluate the fidelity of a “realist” dialect representation of the community in the second text (a play); and (c) help characterize the nonrealist, nonstereotyping, imaginative use of language in the third text (a post-modern novel).

The comparison of literary representations of dialects with actual speech samples of the communities depicted is a growing application of variationist sociolinguistics. Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew, and Deckert (2002) examined the contraction of *not* (e.g., *she isn't*) versus the contraction of the auxiliary in negation (e.g., *she's not*) in a number of varieties of English, using large-scale corpora of various types. From the unscripted spoken corpora, notably the 1980's Switchboard (SWB) corpus of telephone conversations gathered by Texas Instruments from all areas of the United States, Yaeger-Dror and Deckert (2000) found patterns of regional variation in the territory. Speakers from distinct regions show different tendencies in using one type of contraction over the other, with southern U.S. speakers using auxiliary contraction statistically more consistently than northern U.S. speakers. This pattern is confirmed by a parallel analysis of presidential speeches for the last 50 years. The southern presidents use aux-contraction, whereas northern

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presidents favor *not*-contraction. Findings such as these can be used to evaluate the fidelity of literary representations of dialect. Although Harriet Beecher Stow, for example, “may have thought she was writing southern dialogue, the data [concerning negation] indicate that her ear was from Massachusetts” (Yaeger-Dror et al. 2002:104). This is not necessarily typical. In fact, the authors show that when people write about the dialects they *do* know, they are capable of making subtle characteristics, like *not*-contraction, reflect actual regional and ethnic differences. Other studies comparing dialect usage with literary representations include work by Jeff Kallen (2002) on, among other things, the humorous use of Irish English by Irish American comedians, and Fonollosa (1995) who showed that the Canadian playwright, Michel Tremblay’s use of specific syntactic locutions by his Joual characters is entirely consistent with actual working-class speech, as found in the Montreal corpus. See also, Marriott (1997) in connection with the representations of class accents in a British war film.

The present article aims to add to this body of work by uncovering the relation between a gross stereotype or parody of an emerging second language (L2) and actual interlanguage use. I focus on a single grammatical feature of South African Indian English dialect (henceforth SAIE), the use of the verb suffix *-ing* in contexts wider than those permitted in formal standard English. The initial analysis from which the framework arises, draws largely from an earlier paper (Mesthrie, 2002) on a satirical radio series, *Applesammy and Naidoo* (1945) in South Africa. I argue that the arch satirical text systematically flouts the sociolinguistic principles governing speech as described in variation theory (Labov, 1972 and subsequently). Thereafter, I test this framework by subjecting a realist portrayal of the same dialect by an “insider” to a similar analysis. The work I examine is the play, *The Lahnee’s Pleasure*, by Ronnie Govender (c. 1972). Finally, I examine the way a comic, post-modernist novel, *The Wedding*, by Imraan Coovadia (2001) employs the same suffix in a creative way, without flouting the rules of variation theory. In all three texts studied, dialect is not just a matter of “local color,” it is a defining feature.

A brief history of the speech community represented in these texts is necessary. For most of the 20th century, the largest group of Indians outside of South Asia were those of South Africa. The growth of this community stems from a decision by the British government to ship large numbers of Indians to their colonies as cheap labor in the era immediately following the abolition of slavery in the early 19th century. Over 150,000 laborers from different parts of India were shipped to the colony of Natal in the period 1860–1911.<sup>1</sup> The laborers came mostly from the provinces that today are called Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in north India and Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in south India. From 1875 onward, smaller numbers of Indians arrived as voluntary traders from Gujarat and Maharashtra, rather than as semi-forced labor. A number of Indian languages survived in South Africa for over a century and are still spoken there, although in declining numbers (Mesthrie, 1992a): Tamil, Bhojpuri-Hindi, Telugu, Urdu, Gujarati, and even smaller numbers of speakers of Konkani and Meman (a dialect of Sindhi). Few incoming Indians had a command of English. These included the handful of teachers and interpreters brought over,

and some of the traders. The vast majority of Indians learned English on South African soil, developing a distinct dialect, which was initially used for outgroup communication with English speakers, and which soon developed into an “internal” *lingua franca* among subsequent generations of Indians. Thereafter, in the 1960s and 1970s, it turned into a first language (L1). SAIE is today a covert badge of Indian identity and unity in South Africa (see Mesthrie, 1992b:220–221). The dialect still remains today a continuum of varying grammars, styles, and abilities, best described in terms of a continuum that comprises three basic varieties: *basilect*—*mesolect*—*acrolect*. The basilect is spoken with the fluency of an L1, though it might not have been the chronological first language of individuals. Its grammar shows major differences from the target language (TL). The acrolect is generally an L1 spoken by some middle-class speakers with access to the standard early in life. It differs from other varieties of South African English (henceforth SAE) in phonetics and a few syntactic details (see Mesthrie, 1992b). The vast majority of SAIE speakers are mesolectal, having an intermediate grammar that owes much to the basilect, but which is targeted towards the acrolect especially in more formal styles. Most mesolectal and acrolectal speakers today have English as an L1, with those under the age of 40 having a tenuous or no command of an Indian language. Outside the main frame of SAIE are two groups, the first of which is of significance to this article. These are pre-basilectal speakers whose English is decidedly makeshift, while loosely belonging to SAIE. The pre-basilect (henceforth pre-bas) is a diffuse interlanguage frozen in an early form by a few speakers (Mesthrie, 1992b:65–70). These speakers’ norms are conspicuously less developed and focussed (in the sense of Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) than those of basilectal speakers, with whom they nevertheless share some syntactic constructions. Whereas basilectal speakers are part of the SAIE speech community, pre-bas speakers have very limited social networks, centered on the home and on an ancestral language like Tamil. They tend to be poor, little-educated, home-bound, or loners at work. The fifth lect is not of relevance to this article, but will be cited for completeness: “post-acrolectal” speakers who use a norm that mediates between the acrolect and more general KwaZulu-Natal or South African English.<sup>2</sup>

This article examines the ways in which SAIE has been represented in three very different kinds of texts, with a main focus on the use of the verb ending *-ing*. As a baseline, it is first necessary to chart the myriad functions of this suffix in the basilect. First, the standard function of marking present progressive aspect (with *be + -ing*) is to be found as in (1):

(1) *I'm looking* for the matches.

This function competes with several others—the four main ones being: historic present of narration (sentence 2); habitual (3); perfective (4); past habitual (5); and simple past/preterite (6).

(2) *I'm suffering* here now and the pain *is getting* worse. (‘I was suffering (from chest pains) and the pain was getting worse’—in a narrative set in the past).

- (3) He's *travelling* to town every day. ('He travels to town daily').  
 (4) I'm *staying* this house seven years. ('I've been staying in this house for seven years').  
 (5) We was *talking* English at home ('We used to speak English at home').  
 (6) Hawa, she's *telling* she cooks an' all. ('Don't you remember, she said she (still) cooks and so forth').

From these examples we see that SAIE is unusual in using *be* + *-ing* as the historic present of narration, unlike the simple present of most other dialects (Wolfson, 1979). It is also unusual in allowing *be* + *-ing* in past habitual and preterite contexts, although the latter may sometimes overlap with the historic present of narration. Like many second-language varieties of English ("New Englishes") SAIE is tolerant of *-ing* in stative and habitual contexts (see Platt, Weber, & Ho, 1984:72–73, for other varieties). Although some L1 varieties in the U.K. and U.S. also allow *be* + *-ing* with statives in sentences like (3) and (4), it is doubtful that they do so to the same extent as the New Englishes. By contrast, in "cultivated" SAE, which counts as the local prestige variety, *be* + *-ing* is generally disallowed with stative verbs.<sup>3</sup>

A further consideration is that basilectal and pre-bas SAIE speakers may use *-ing* to varying extents without the preceding auxiliary verb *be*:

- (7) Just like that *carrying* on, you know. ('We carry on / are carrying on just like that . . .').

As (7) shows, absence of *be* may also occur with pro-drop, but this is not a necessary condition. At the outset, it is important to distinguish between the primary function of *be* + *-ing* as a marker of progressive aspect in varieties of English and the use of *-ing* as an overgeneralization of the "bare *-ing*" form (of gerunds, participles etc.). These are distinguished functionally, though not always formally, because standard *be* + *-ing* progressives may show the absence of *be* in some SAIE lects. Both progressives and bare *-ing* verb forms are of interest in this study for the way they have been used (and sometimes conflated) in written representations of SAIE. Statistics for the functions of *be* + *-ing* among a representative sample of SAIE speakers are given in Mesthrie (1992b:51–52; 68–70). These and other related statistics will be provided when analyzing the use of (*be*) + *-ing* in the three literary texts in the following sections.

#### STEREOTYPES IN *APPLESAMMY AND NAIDOO*

The text of a popular radio comedy series aimed at listeners in Natal in the 1940s, involving two Indian characters, is of potential importance in adding SAIE data for a period in which information about colloquial speech norms is rare. Evolving from earlier sketches on radio involving Indian characters in the early 1940s, it stabilized as *Applesammy and Naidoo* (henceforth *A&N*). The leading roles were played by the scriptwriters, Ray Rich and Dusty Cracknell. About their performances, the creator of the sketches, P. B. Durnford (1946:3–4) wrote:

The popularity of their performances is something no one will be brave enough to dispute, and I think it worth mentioning that some of their most ardent fans are the Natal Indian listeners who relish the odd wisecracks in their own language that “Dusty” Cracknell frequently interposes. It ought to be more widely known that Mr. Cracknell is in fact an accomplished linguist and speaks Tamil, Telugu and Hindustani.

The text of the programs was reproduced in a booklet *The Adventures of Applesammy and Naidoo*, carrying the subtitle *A book for young people, based on the stories behind the popular broadcasts of “Applesammy and Naidoo.”* The booklet comprises 25 short chapters or episodes detailing the misadventures of its two heroes. Much of the presentation is dramatic, with their direct speech making up approximately 564 sentences (5681 words).<sup>4</sup> An illustrative excerpt, from the first chapter (p. 5), is given next.

“Me I very good pishing man me,” said Naidoo, in the broken English that he always spoke. “Me I catching plenty that Simons, gallunters, stumping noses, chads and sharkses. All kind big pish me I catching.”

“You catching that pawpaws Naidoo?” asked Applesammy.

“What you meaning man. That vegitable they not going by that sea.”

[*Colloquial Standard English*: “Me, I’m a very good fisherman, I am,” said Naidoo, in the broken English that he always spoke. “Me, I catch plenty of salmon, grunters, stump noses, shad and sharks. I catch all kinds of big fish.”

“Do you catch paw-paws/papayas [porpoises], Naidoo?” asked Applesammy.

“What do you mean, man. Those vegetables don’t go to the sea.”]

It is apparent from excerpts like these that the comedy is based on (and/or builds up) a stereotype of Indians, more specifically of descendants of Indian indentured workers drawn into an urban environment. Typical misadventures involving fishing, bee-catching, buying cars, horse-racing, selling flowers, encounters with the bureaucracy, and so forth produce stock comedy with great opportunities for stereotyping. The comedy is not subtle; it demeans the character’s actions, attributes lowly motives to their actions and—more insidiously—draws a firm line between the ignorant and less than law-abiding Indian characters and their rather better-informed white characters and young readers. For example, the very first chapter ends with a disastrous fishing outing for the characters, “they had lost their rods and their tackle, and were wet and miserable” (p. 8). The concluding paragraph speaks to the young reader:

But it really served them right, didn’t it? They shouldn’t have broken the law as they did. Anyway that taught them a lesson, and they never tried fishing in the black-out again.

The text certainly deserves the attention of the historical sociologist. Despite itself, it can be seen as serving a serious function—perhaps a reassurance to the dominant classes of the time of their own superiority in the face of the growing urbanization of (and therefore possibilities of greater competition from) people originally destined for the plantations. An essential part of this reassurance is in the very choice of medium. The two characters (and a nephew Chinsammy, who

makes a brief appearance in chapter 22) speak in English jargon or “broken language”; the authorial voice is always in standard English, as is that of all the white characters. By this means a dichotomy is set up between “authentic” voice and that of the “other.”

In Mesthrie (2002) I argued that *A&N* is a caricature, rather than a representation that linguists might draw on for data on SAIE, from a period for which little other linguistic data exists. This caricature is one that was doing the rounds in the British Asian Empire since the 19th century. It is also parallel to the caricatures of African Americans in the U.S., in the radio series *Amos and Andy* (Anthony Kroch, personal communication, 2002). Linguistically, some of the features have their roots in Butler English, a variety spoken by house-servants in British India—the butler being a rather less dignified figure than that of upper-class Victorian England. Butler English was documented by Schuchardt (1891), who claimed that English employers also used the jargon in conversing with their employees. Hosali (2000) showed that this pidgin-like variety survives to the present day in parts of south India. In Mesthrie (1990) I showed that pre-basilectal SAIE shows many similarities with Butler English, but that it probably arose independently in Natal, where it is not a coherently defined entity in the way that the basilect is. However, because the existence of a similar variety to Butler English has been reported in at least one other territory (Burma) where British settlers employed immigrant Indians, it could well have been transported as a kind of foreigner talk by British settlers in Natal with prior experience of India. An illustration of such foreigner talk occurs in George Orwell’s *Burmese Days*:

It was after nine now, and the room, scented with the acrid smoke of Westfield’s cheroot, was stifling hot. Everyone’s shirt stuck to his back with the first sweat of the day. The invisible *chokra* who pulled the punkah rope outside was falling asleep in the glare.

“Butler!” yelled Ellis, and as the butler appeared, “go and wake that bloody *chokra* up!”

“Yes, master.”

“And butler!”

“Yes master?”

“How much ice have we got left?”

“Bout twenty pounds, master. Will only last today, I think. I find it very difficult to keep ice cool now.”

“Don’t talk like that, damn you—‘I find it very difficult!’ have you swallowed a dictionary? ‘Please, master, can’t keeping ice cool’—that’s how you ought to talk. We shall have to sack this fellow if he gets to talk English too well. I can’t stick servants who talk English. D’you hear, Butler?”

“Yes, master,” said the butler, and retired. (Orwell, 1934:24–25)

I have quoted this passage at length because the employer uses one of the constructions studied in this article, as a kind of foreigner talk (“can’t *keeping* ice cool” for “I can’t keep the ice cool”). This example of foreigner talk involves

pro-drop and the “bare *-ing*” form. That is, *-ing* is preceded by a modal, rather than by *be*; and the Verb + *-ing* is really a nonfinite form.

It is in the nature of stereotypes that they are based in a small measure on reality. Apte (1994:4349) cited Brown (1965) who spoke of a “kernel of truth” hypothesis in the literature on stereotypes. Some of the linguistic features of the characters in the text do cluster in Indian English dialect, and survive in the speech of older, rural, and less-educated people in the early 21st century. On the other hand, Apte (1994:4348) affirmed that “a stereotype is now considered to be an overgeneralization and an uninformed one.” These remarks apply rather well to the portrayal of SAIE by the *A&N* satirists.

The baseline that I will use to illustrate the stereotyping effects in *A&N* is the English of the least competent speakers in my database of the 1980s. Such pre-basilectal speakers are difficult to follow, even for SAIE speakers who are thoroughly familiar with the rest of the dialect as a whole. Next I give an excerpt from a male pre-bas speaker:

I work in the—little bit time—in the Renishaw Mill; not working in the mill—field, working in the field. I working with the hoe, too. After this white faller saying “No, no, no, you go there, by the line, you know ‘line’?” Same place I got the hurt, here, toe. This time I went there hospital, Khan’s Hospital.

The comparison between characters depicted in the 1940s and pre-bas speakers of the 1980s is not asynchronous, given that all six pre-bas speakers of my original database were elderly and loners (and therefore not likely to have undergone many changes in speech norms in their lifetime). They would have been around the age of 15 to 25 at the time of the *A&N* series—a perfect match with the characters satirized there. Linguistically, this group seems most appropriate for comparing SAIE usage with the language of the *A&N* scripts. Socially, however, there is a mismatch because the kind of adventurous persons who had regular (if unequal) contacts with whites would not have been pre-basilectal. Had Apple-sammy and Naidoo really been young, adventurous men living in the 1940s, they would probably be speakers of the basilect or lower mesolect and shift styles “upwards” in out-group communication with whites. In other words, the comparison I am making between pre-bas and *A&N* (rather than basilect or lower mesolect and *A&N*) is more than generous to the scriptwriter.<sup>5</sup> (For the other texts, *The Lahnee’s Pleasure* and *The Wedding*, it will be necessary to include basilectal norms, as well.)

In *A&N*, the two main characters have speaking parts in which *-ing* is applied as an ending to almost all verbs, irrespective of tense, mood, and aspect, as (8) shows.<sup>6</sup>

(8) But how me I can *knowing* when that bite he *coming*? (‘How could I have known when I got a bite’)

The range of functions of *-ing* in *A&N* is shown in Table 1.

All attestations of *-ing* in *A&N* are nonstandard. This includes the present progressives, which are standard in semantics, but nonstandard in form, because they lack a preceding *be*. Examples of each of these categories follow.

TABLE 1. *The functions of -ing in A&N*

|                                      | <i>n</i> |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Present progressive                  | 70       |
| Present habitual/stative             | 157      |
| Future                               | 02       |
| Past progressive                     | 03       |
| Simple past                          | 51       |
| Habitual past                        | 00       |
| Perfective                           | 17       |
| Infinitive with <i>to, let, etc.</i> | 33       |
| With modal auxiliary                 | 206      |
| Imperative                           | 27       |
| Total                                | 566      |

*Present progressive:*

(9) That policingman's boat he *coming* this side Applesammy. ('The policeman's boat is coming this side, Applesammy.')

*Present stative:*

(10) What you *meaning* man? ('What do you mean man?')

*Present habitual:*

(11) And he *solling* plenty honey and he *making* lots, lots money. ('He sells lots of honey and makes lots of money.')

*Future:*

(12) They *making* us cooking<sup>7</sup> boys, and we can getting plenty things to yeating. ('They'll make us cooks, and we can (then) get plenty things to eat.')

*Past progressive:*

(13) Hello Naidoo—ha, ha, you silly pool—you *looking* at that chooree<sup>8</sup> girls eh? ('Hello Naidoo—ha ha, you silly fool, you were looking at girls, hey.')

*Simple past:*

(14) But last week you saying that you don't *liking* to killing that pigs Applesammy. ('But last week you said that you don't like to kill pigs, Applesammy.')

*Past habitual:* (none)<sup>9</sup>*Perfective:*

(15) Long time me I not *yeating* that Curry Pish man Naidoo. ('It's been a long time since I've eaten curried fish, man, Naidoo.')

*Infinitive with to, let, etc.*

(16) Come on let's us *going watching* this race man. ('Come on, let's go and watch the race, man.')

*With modal auxiliary:*

(17) Me I can *pixing* that my rod first time Applesammy, then me I can *pixing* that your rod, eh? ('Let me fix my rod first, then I can fix yours, hey.')

*Imperative:*

(18) Please master *gaving* that nurrer one chance please master. ('Please give me another chance, master.')



TABLE 2. *The functions of -ing (with or without be) in pre-basilectal SAIE*

|                                      | <i>n</i> |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Present progressive                  | 06       |
| Present habitual/stative             | 26       |
| Future                               | 00       |
| Past progressive                     | 17       |
| Simple past                          | 24       |
| Habitual past                        | 05       |
| Perfective                           | 00       |
| Infinitive with <i>to, let, etc.</i> | 02       |
| With modal auxiliary                 | 00       |
| Imperative                           | 00       |
| Total                                | 80       |

TABLE 3. *The use of be + -ing and bare -ing in pre-bas and A&N*

|  | Present Tense |         | Past Tense |         |
|--|---------------|---------|------------|---------|
|  | A&N           | Pre-bas | A&N        | Pre-bas |
| <i>be</i> + <i>-ing</i> progressives     | 0             | 2       | 0          | 1       |
| <i>be</i> + <i>-ing</i> habitual/stative | 0             | 2       | 0          | 7       |
| ∅ + <i>-ing</i> progressives             | 70            | 6       | 3          | 17      |
| ∅ + <i>-ing</i> habitual/stative         | 157           | 26      | 68         | 29      |
| Verb forms without <i>-ing</i>           | 0             | 41      | 1          | 96      |

A&N thus gives the impression that its characters don't have a concept of tense, mood, and aspect. They use *-ing* simply as a marker of a verb, irrespective of whether it is progressive in semantics or not, and a fused object marker *-it* with *got*. Only three verbs are exceptions (see note 6 for these three and the fused form *gottit*). Table 2 (based on Mesthrie, 1992b) gives the use of *-ing* forms (with or without *be*) for the same functions among five pre-bas speakers by way of comparison.

Because *-ing* differs in its semantic function of progressive marker (with or without *be*) from its function as a bare suffix, it is necessary to separate these functions and examine them more closely. Table 3 details the use of (*be*) + *-ing* in these two functions in pre-bas and A&N.

From Table 3 it is evident that A&N eschews regular forms for all categories of verb: almost all verbs have a ∅ + *-ing* ending.<sup>10</sup> This suffix corresponds to the standard progressive in *be* + *-ing* or it may simply be an overgeneralized bare *-ing* form, equivalent to the standard simple present or preterite forms. This state of affairs contrasts with that of the pre-bas, which has *be* + *-ing* as well as ∅ + *-ing*

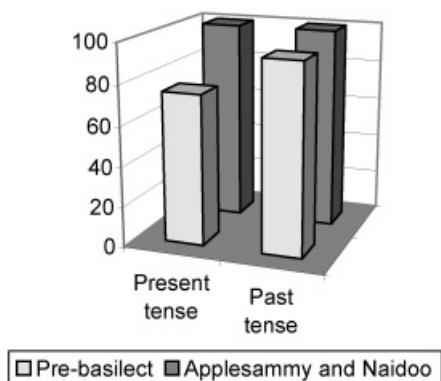


FIGURE 1A. Percentage of  $\emptyset + ing$  verb forms in relation to progressives in pre-basilect and *Applesammy and Naidoo*.

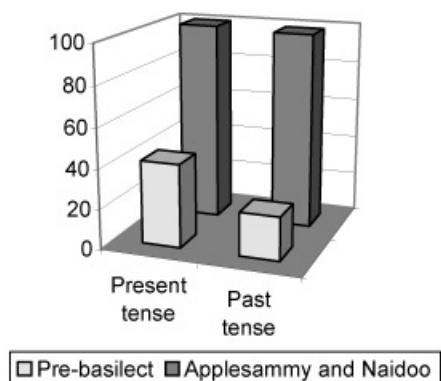


FIGURE 1B. Percentage of  $\emptyset + ing$  verb forms in relation to nonprogressives in pre-basilect and *Applesammy and Naidoo*.

forms in stative and nonstative contexts. Moreover, pre-bas does have a majority of verb forms without *-ing*. To show the nature of the stereotyping of SAIE verbs in *A&N*, Figure 1A compares the proportion of  $\emptyset + -ing$  forms to *be + -ing* progressive forms; whereas Figure 1B compares the proportion of  $\emptyset + -ing$  forms to nonprogressive verb forms without *-ing*.

Figure 1A shows that the two databases do have something in common (the “kernel of truth” hypothesis): pre-bas does make high use of  $\emptyset + -ing$  forms in progressive contexts. At the same time, Figure 1A shows quantitative overgeneralization as the relatively high occurrences of  $\emptyset + -ing$  for progressives in pre-bas are made even higher in *A&N*. Figure 1B shows that pre-bas makes considerably

TABLE 4. A comparison of the proportionate use of nonprogressive  $\emptyset$  + -ing per verb function in A&N and pre-bas

|                           | A&N             | Pre-bas        |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Present (nonprogressive)  | 157/157 (100%)  | 26/67 (38.8%)  |
| Future                    | 2/2 (100%)      | 0/6 (0.0%)     |
| Past (nonprogressive)     | 68/69 (98.5%)   | 29/125 (23.2%) |
| With modal aux            | 206/207 (99.5%) | 0/32 (0.0%)    |
| Imperative                | 27/33 (81.8%)   | 0/8 (0.0%)     |
| With <i>to, let, etc.</i> | 33/35 (94.2%)   | 2/13 (15.4%)   |

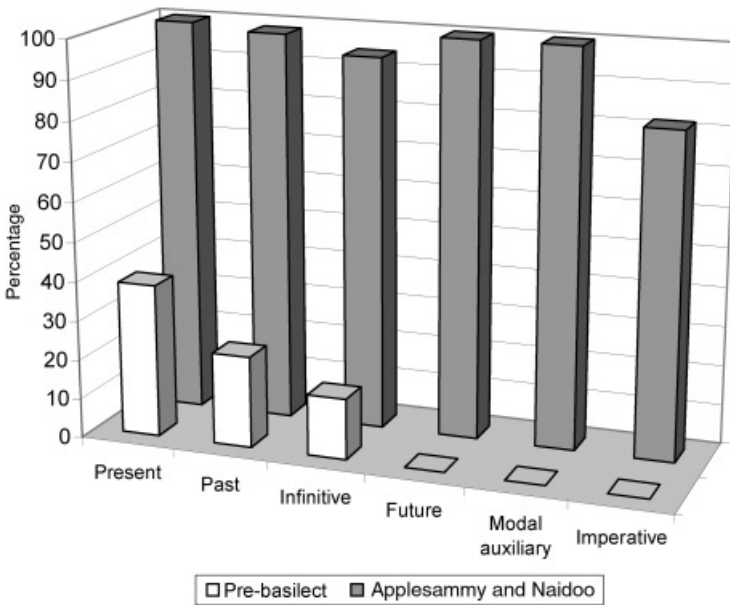


FIGURE 2. Percentage of forms with nonprogressive -ing per tense category in *Applesammy and Naidoo* and the pre-basilect.

less use of  $\emptyset$  + -ing in nonprogressive contexts. However, this is ignored in the A&N stereotype, which treats  $\emptyset$  + -ing in nonprogressive contexts the same as in progressive contexts.

Whereas Tables 1 and 2 give the raw figures for each environment (or function) for -ing, Table 4 gives the proportionate use of -ing to the verbs without -ing in each environment. Because we are in effect measuring the overgeneralization of -ing, this time it is necessary to factor out ordinary progressives requiring *be* + -ing in standard English.<sup>11</sup> Figure 2 is a diagrammatic representation of Table 4.

The overall difference between the two sets of bar graphs in Figure 2 is dramatic, revealing the exaggerative effect of the stereotype more fully than do Figures 1A and 1B:

- (a) There is no use of imperatives with *-ing* in pre-bas; in *A&N* they are virtually mandatory.
- (b) As infinitive with *to*, *let's* etc. the form *-ing* is rare in pre-bas; but virtually mandatory in *A&N*.
- (c) There is no record of *-ing* being used with a modal auxiliary like *can* and *must* in pre-bas; in *A&N* it is mandatory.
- (d) There is no use of future *-ing* in pre-bas, unlike *A&N*.

Constructs from variation theory are useful in characterizing the nature of the stereotyping evident in *A&N*. It is clear from Tables 3 and 4 and Figures 1 and 2 that:

- (a) The basis for the stereotype is the use of *-ing* by pre-basilectal (and even basilectal) speakers who use *-ing* forms fairly often without the verb *be* in the present progressive, and who extend it to occasional use in other contexts like the habitual present or the simple past.
- (b) The stereotype presents a variable rule for *-ing* as if it is invariant in each of the contexts concerned.
- (c) The stereotype overgeneralizes the rule grammatically to “neighboring” contexts in which pre-bas *-ing* does not occur (imperative, future, modal auxiliary).

Furthermore the text as a whole promotes other effects, which are not presented in Figure 2:

- (d) The stereotype overgeneralizes the variable rule socially insofar as almost all Indian speakers are made to speak like this.<sup>12</sup>
- (e) The stereotype overgeneralizes the rule stylistically insofar as the speakers speak in this way in all styles. (See particularly the authorial comment cited earlier: “*said, Naidoo, in the broken English he always spoke.*”)

The gross stereotyping text is thus an antithesis of natural language usage described in sociolinguistics (e.g., Bell, 1984; Chambers, 2003; Labov, 1972) in which variation is shown to be a normal form of linguistic behavior. My database shows that even pre-bas speakers of an L2 show variation in their grammar. Although they do not, by any means, have advanced abilities in the TL, the forms that do exist in their interlanguage are seldom invariant. Like the character, Ellis in Orwell’s *Burmese Days* the authors of *A&N* attempt to suppress this variation and impose a unidimensional “otherness” to the speech of colonial subjects. It is interesting that the same grammatical form, *-ing* without *be*, should have been targeted. Orwell’s character insists, “‘*Please, master, can’t keeping ice cool*’—*that’s how you ought to talk.*” Yet not a single occurrence of *-ing* in this context (after modals) occurs in my pre-bas data, despite 32 opportunities for such use.

Yaeger-Dror (1992) characterizes any instance of an individual using a linguistic variant more than those he/she is emulating, as a form of hypercorrection. Since “correction” towards a prestige norm is not always evident in studies of traditional (quantitative) hypercorrection of the sort described by Labov (1966), Yaeger-Dror proposed the more general term *hyperaccommodation*, based on the account of code convergence and divergence between interlocutors put forth by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977). Following from this account, Janda and Auger (1992) described various types of hypercorrection/hyperaccommodation, including humorous hypercorrection, which is of relevance here. They characterize it as a striking kind of downward hypercorrection, occurring when speakers in the emulating group have higher social status than members of the emulated group. Janda and Auger (1992:209) characterize this “mocking process” following from qualitative hypercorrection in the following way:

(a) Members of some social group attempt to imitate the speech of another group, for humorous reasons.

(b) They therefore replace one or more native elements from their own speech with one or more nonnative elements that they believe to be used by speakers in the group targeted for imitation.

(c) They end up overgeneralizing such a nonnative element to one or more new environments—a form of qualitative hypercorrection.

(d) In these environments, members of the target group actually have either the same form used by the speakers attempting them or yet a third form.

For examples from African American Vernacular English (AAVE), see Janda and Auger (1992:209). Baugh (1992) used the term *hypocorrection* in the case of adjustments “downwards” toward a less prestigious dialect variant by speakers of a more prestigious variety. The type of hypocorrection he described is not done for humorous reasons. His example is of African Americans brought up on standard American English attempting to deploy AAVE as a second dialect in certain contexts.

Although Janda and Auger’s four-step account of humorous hypercorrection does apply broadly to the *A&N* text, the phenomenon underlying the parody involves so deliberate and invariant a process that neither the term *hypercorrection* nor *hyperaccommodation* convey the right nuance. The most appropriate term for the gross stereotyping in *A&N* seems to be “mock language”—that is, the use of a lower status language or dialect in an exaggerated or distorted way by speakers of a dominant variety, with the intention of stereotyping and parodying speakers of the dominated variety. Jane Hill (1993) used the term “mock Spanish” for the appropriation of presumed linguistic features of Spanish by English speakers in the southwestern United States in casual speech. Hill provided the example of *Hasta la vista, baby*, which parodies and devalues the formal Spanish phrase *hasta la vista* (literally, “until—the—seeing”), which signals a sincere hope for the pleasure of a future meeting. The juxtaposition with the slang term *baby* renders the original phrase colloquial and vulgar, as does the exaggerated intonation in which the phrase would be rendered. Similarly, Ronkin and Karn

(1999) used the term “mock Ebonics” to describe the vast number of materials on the Internet that parody Ebonics or African American Vernacular English.

There is a further violation of “naturalness” in *A&N*. In Mesthrie (2002) I show that *A&N* is an odd mixture of certain early-interlanguage features used frequently in the interests of stereotyping (e.g., *-ing* and the fixed, fused verb-form *gottit*, see note 6) with more advanced features (e.g., a range of prepositions and plural nouns) dictated by the need to be intelligible to its listeners. One should beware of circularity here, if *early interlanguage features* simply means “non-standard forms more characteristic of *A&N* than pre-bas,” and *advanced feature* means “standard forms more characteristic of *A&N* than pre-bas.” There has to be an independent metric to decide which forms occur in early acquisition and which occur later. Such independent evidence can be found in studies of L1 and L2 acquisition. Ellis’s summaries (1994:78–100) make it clear that (1) *-ing* is a form that occurs first (i.e., before other verb inflections) in child language and in L2 acquisition; (2) that among prepositions, *in* and *on* are acquired first; (3) that uncontracted copulas occur before contracted copulas (e.g., *are* before *'re*; *is* before *'s*); and (4) that *can't* occurs prior to, and is more frequent than, *can*. In all these respects, *A&N* is a poor reflection of a specific interlanguage level of its characters. There is a reason for this lack of naturalness, which I term “the interests of the text.” If *A&N* were really to reproduce the norms of pre-bas (or even the basilect), it would be unintelligible to a majority of its listeners or readers. As I indicated in Mesthrie (1992b:65), the pre-bas is difficult to follow, even for people familiar with SAIE as a whole. It is little surprise then that there are some features in which *A&N* performs in a more TL way than pre-bas. I illustrated this in relation to prepositions and noun plurals in Mesthrie (2002).

#### DIALECT REALISM IN *THE LAHNEE'S PLEASURE*

I now turn to *The Lahnee's Pleasure* (henceforth *LP*), a play written by Ronnie Govender, a member of the SAIE community. The play aims to faithfully represent the L2 working-class dialect of the mid-20th century. The broader question is whether a native speaker-writer, knowledgeable about the speech norms of a community, might nevertheless still be susceptible to the process of linguistic overgeneralization. In other words, is a degree of stereotyping inevitable as creative writers seek to impose some order on the multifarious utterances that speakers are capable of in everyday speech? The play *LP* is set on a sugar estate of the Natal North Coast in what appears to be the late 1960s.<sup>13</sup> Its immediate setting is a bar during a single afternoon, in which the main character, Mothie, initially reminisces with the barman, Sunny, about the old days, and the passing of some working-class traditions. He is caught at a turning point between an older rural world and a more modern, urbanizing one. Tension in the play follows from Mothie's mostly irreverent attitude towards the *lahnee* (“white boss,” in this case the owner of the bar) and the barman's desire not to provoke the white customers in the adjacent lounge. The structures of apartheid are thus not too far removed

from the quietude of the Mt. Edgecombe bar room. Tension also follows from Mothie's own heavy-handedness as a parent, which brings him into collision with his daughter, who wishes to elope. That the play was a roaring success when it was staged has more to do with its language and style than with any intricacies of its plot. Much of its success came from an audience responding to the novelty of finding representations of itself and its language on a public stage—a kind of liberation from semantic repression. The medium was almost the message itself. The following excerpt is from Act 1 (p. 7), with a gloss into standard English.

MOTHIE: Arreh, our time, man, our time. Girls can't come out of the house—so strict they was. Arreh, six o'clock all the doors will be closed. Can't see one girl with one eyes. That time boys must dance girls part. Saturday night! Saturday night! Fire all *burning* one side. All the pots will *be cooking* one side. Thabla, saranji, all *getting* hot by the fire. Everbody will ask, Mothie came way? Me! Kisten came way? Your father! Everybody *looking* for us to start the wedding joll.

You know these big, big shots from Durban, Sunnyia—arreh, all will come and sit in one place. *Drinking* whisky, brandy, everything man.

*Colloquial Standard English:*

Hey, our times [were quite something]. The parents were so strict that girls weren't allowed out of the home. Y'know, people would shut their doors at 6 o'clock. You couldn't see a girl at all. At that time boys had to dance the part of girls [in shows]. Saturday nights [were something else]. On one side a fire would be burning; and pots of food would be cooking. The thabla and sarangi [musical instruments] would be kept warm by the fire. Everybody would ask "Has Mothie arrived?" That's me . . . "Has Kisten come?" That's your father. . . Everybody would be looking out for us to start the merry-making.

Y' know, Sunny, even the big shots from Durban would come to sit and watch. They would be drinking whisky, brandy and such.

This excerpt draws largely on basilectal speech, emphasizing the norms of working-class people who evolved a variety of English radically different in many respects from the more standard varieties of colonial English spoken by the ruling classes and promulgated in classrooms. It is of some interest to ascertain exactly how authentic the representation of language in the play is. I will first comment on this issue broadly, before providing statistical comparisons with the categories analyzed in the *A&N* text. The playwright is sensitive to language variation of several sorts. Although the main character, Mothie, speaks mainly basilectal SAIE, his speech shows occasional style shifting, as one would expect. Thus, he switches to an acrolectal form (more or less standard) on p. 8:

(19) (*Proceeds to table and says loudly*) If I want to drink wine, it's my business.

This is an act of code divergence, in defiance of the newcomer in the bar, obviously an outsider (of Indian origin) looking "with kindly amusement" at Mothie's antics. Later (p. 11) Mothie repeats the same sentence aggressively to the barman:

(20) If I want to drink—my business.

The deletion of the dummy subject *it* and of the copula verb *is* in (20) is more in keeping with basilectal norms, showing a convergence back to the norms of the bar room. Another piece of variation involves Mothie's encouraging words to his young son, who is offered a soft drink by the barman:

- (21) Go, uncle giving cold drink, go. ('Go and receive the cold drink that the barman is offering you.')

With the absence of the object pronoun *you* and the article *a* after the main verb *giving*, this counts as a piece of downshifting typical of adults speaking to children, signifying a kindly cajolement. In Mesthrie (2003) I showed how the basilect and pre-basilect is understood by working-class parents to be an appropriate variety for addressing children.

Another sociolinguistic point of relevance is that Mothie's language is basilectal, but does not include much slang.<sup>14</sup> This is in contrast to the language of the younger bar man, Sunny, whose mesolectal speech contains a fair amount of slang. On page 16 of the text, Sunny uses the following slang items: *ous* 'people, male persons'; *pulled out* 'left'; *bro* 'brother, chum', *lighties* 'boys'; *catch it* 'be beaten'; *lahnee* 'rich man'. Such vocabulary is not used by Mothie, apart from *lightie* and *lahnee*. These terms are, in fact, on the borderline between slang and dialect for many South Africans today. The sociolinguistic nuance conveyed here is that of an old, rural person lacking the wiles of city-slick males, who use a high degree of slang. Mothie's speech thus evokes laughter because the audience finds the use of this private, (lower) class-code in a public setting novel and incongruous. But the longer he speaks (without slang) the more sympathetic one feels towards him.

When the boss himself makes an appearance, his language involves a kind of talking down, in the direction of the mock language associated with the *A&N* stereotypes:

- (22) Now you going to have one big, big wedding. Don't forget to bring me some curry and rice.... Hey Mothie have one nother one wine .... and give those chaps a drink too ... (p. 41).

However, neither his language nor his attitude shows undiluted mockery. There is a gesture of goodwill in the offer of drink and the request for food from the wedding. Likewise, two of his utterances here are standard (*Don't forget to bring me some curry and rice* and *give those chaps a drink too*), rather than mock language. His attempt at joviality here is tinged with slight condescension, conveyed by a version of SAIE that unwittingly contains several mistakes. First, in the phrase *big, big wedding*, reduplication of the adjective *big* is used inappropriately with a singular noun. Compare this with Mothie's earlier utterance (p. 7):

- (23) What big, big prayers we'll have.

Mothie's utterance in (23) shows the appropriate context for the reduplication, before plural nouns.<sup>15</sup> The second error in the boss's speech is the phrase *one nother one* for "another": The SAIE basilect form is *nother one*. It is also note-



TABLE 5. *A comparison of the proportionate use of nonprogressive Ø + -ing per verb function in A&N, pre-bas, basilect, and LP*

|                           | A&N             | Pre-bas        | LP                        | Basilect      |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Present (nonprogressive)  | 157/157 (100%)  | 26/67 (38.8%)  | 0/28 (0.0%)               | 14/206 (6.8%) |
| Future                    | 2/2 (100%)      | 0/6 (0.0%)     | 0/12 (0.0%) <sup>16</sup> | 0/2 (0.0%)    |
| Past (nonprogressive)     | 68/69 (98.5%)   | 29/125 (23.2%) | 0/15 (0.0%)               | 3/417 (0.7%)  |
| With modal aux            | 206/207 (99.5%) | 0/32 (0.0%)    | 0/31 (0.0%)               | 0/129 (0.0%)  |
| Imperative                | 27/33 (81.8%)   | 0/8 (0.0%)     | 0/33 (0.0%)               | 0/20 (0.0%)   |
| With <i>to, let, etc.</i> | 33/35 (94.2%)   | 2/13 (15.4%)   | 0/5 (0.0%)                | 0/82 (0.0%)   |

worthy that the playwright allows the boss a sociolinguistically realistic repertoire in this exchange: Standard English on the phone; standard English initially to Mothie to break the serious news from the police station; followed by an attempt at joviality involving convergence (with hypercorrective errors as noted, which are in keeping with Janda & Auger’s account of downward hyperaccommodation).

I now examine the use made by the playwright of the *be + ing* construction in the utterances of Mothie. The broader questions, as already mentioned, are whether a degree of sociolinguistic veracity can be found in Mothie’s use of a specific grammatical construction or whether even well-intentioned authors fall prey to stereotyping in this respect. Table 5 compares the statistics for A&N and pre-bas in Table 4 with those of LP and the basilect.

For three categories (future, modal aux, and imperative) LP shows zero use of *-ing*, in keeping with the pre-bas and basilect, and unlike LP. In a fourth category (infinitives), LP reflects the zero usage of the basilect, rather than the sporadic use of pre-bas. The use of Ø + *-ing* in LP forms thus closely matches that of my basilectal sample, with one exception: The playwright eschews Ø + *-ing* for the simple present and past. The reason for this is that these are residual forms of the basilect (more characteristic of the pre-bas, which has overtones of being “broken”). The proportions for the basilect, as given in Table 5, are in fact 14/206 (6.8%) and 3/417 (0.7%). LP ignored this residue. Instead, the LP text favored a more sophisticated use of Ø + *-ing* for past habitual irrealis progressives (cf., *everybody looking for us* for “everybody would be looking for us” in the LP passage cited earlier).

Figure 3 presents the information given in Table 5 graphically. Figure 3 confirms that LP and A&N are mirror opposites for the nonprogressive Ø + *-ing* forms. A&N blows up the small number of such forms from pre-bas and basilect into a categorical presence. LP, on the other hand, ignores this small number of forms in favor of categorical absence. Hence, LP does not show up in the graph for Figure 3 at all. However, LP does not ignore dialect use of *be + -ing*. This is reflected in Table 6, which shows the proportion of progressive *-ing* forms without *be* to the number of *-ing* forms with *be*.

Table 6 shows how close Mothie’s norms are to the basilect for progressives, rather than to pre-bas and A&N. This is a socially authentic portrayal of someone

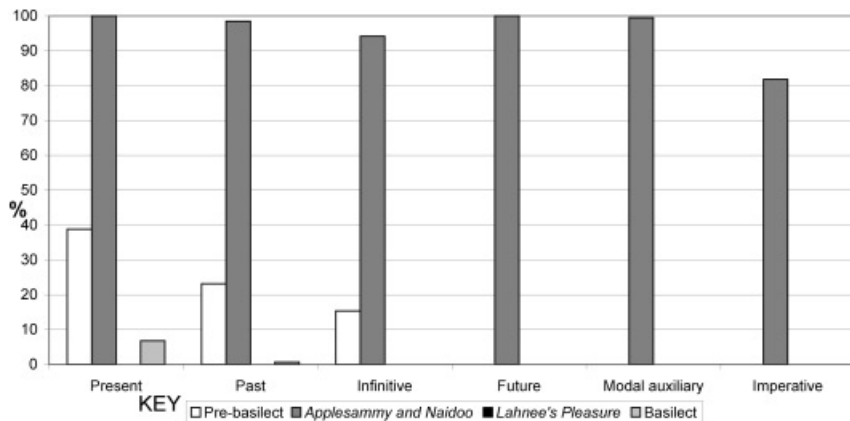


FIGURE 3. Percentage of forms with nonprogressive *-ing* per tense category in *Applesammy and Naidoo*, *The Lahnee's Pleasure*, the basilect, and pre-basilect.

TABLE 6. Proportion of progressive  $\emptyset$  + *-ing* verb forms to total number of progressive verb forms with *be* + *-ing* or  $\emptyset$  + *-ing* in two texts and two lects

|             | A&N          | Pre-bas       | LP         | Basilect      |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| Progressive | 73/73 (100%) | 23/26 (88.5%) | 9/20 (45%) | 10/31 (32.3%) |

with minimal education, with community-based social networks, and little or no social contact with L1 English speakers. Tables 5 and 6 thus show that a native-speaker playwright with “realist” intentions can replicate a community’s non-standard norms with a high degree of accuracy. This includes representing the community’s variable rules (in this case, for the use of the two types of *-ing*), as well as showing the effects of “audience design” (Bell, 1984), as Mothie style-shifts in accommodation to different speakers. The “interests of the text” are less evident in Mothie’s speech, apart from his use of occasional past habitual *used to* rather than *should*. Here, it is possible that the playwright was constrained by the difficulties that *should* might pose to a wider audience. SAIE is the only dialect of English world-wide to use *should* (variably, but quite commonly) for the past habitual “used to.” There is another sense in which the interests of the text are invoked, that is, in the play as a whole. There is a necessary contrast between the standard speech of the Indian stranger returning from England, and the basilectal norms of the main character. The standard speech acts as something of a counterpoint to Mothie’s language. Some standard speech is necessary to keep a sense of balance in order to make this a creative work with a reasonably broad appeal, and not simply a dialect tract. The standard speech also reminds the audience that

not all Indians are basilectal. That is, *LP* avoids the social overgeneralization evident in *A&N*.

TRANSCENDING DIALECT REALISM—*THE WEDDING*

I now turn briefly to the final text, *The Wedding* (henceforth *TW*), a novel by Imraan Coovadia, also a member of the SAIE speech community. The novel's plot is simple: It deals with the chance meeting of a city man and a village woman in India, their hurried wedding (against the woman's wishes) and their eventual journey to a new life in South Africa. More anti-romance than romance, this tale is told in an effusive style, described on the front cover blurb by 2003 Nobel laureate, J. M. Coetzee as "prose of dazzling comic wizardry." Much of the novel is in the form of dialogue and the free indirect style of the characters. An authorial voice using standard English is rather less evident. There is one way that this text differs from *A&N* and *LP*: The English is not meant to represent English as such (though the author is silent about this). Rather, it is intended as a representation of the L1 of the characters (either Marathi, Gujarati, or the Meman dialect of Sindhi). The following excerpt deals with the attempts by a poor and miserly father-in-law to get his new son-in-law to accept two train tickets to Hyderabad as a wedding gift. This show of generosity is mitigated by the fact that he did not have to pay for the tickets, and that Hyderabad—an unlikely honeymoon spot—is in the wrong direction from the newlyweds destination, Bombay. In the following extract, Yusuf is the father-in-law and Ismet is the son-in-law besotted with his new village-girl wife, Khateja, who does not reciprocate such feelings in the slightest.

"Hyderabad! But that is located in the opposite direction!" "Oh," Yusuf said smoothly, "but that is precisely the point. Leisure time. When you get to Hyderabad all you must do is buy a ticket and lo! You will arrive in Bombay quick-snaps. You will say, 'My good father Yusuf, he was absolutely correct. In fact, my holiday was too-too short. A fleeting thing. Pity we didn't get a chance to see more of Hyderabad, it is one of our oldest and most interesting Indian cities.' I give you my personal guarantee."

Then he quieted his voice and said confidentially, "Besides, it is Khateja who *is wanting* this thing, you see. Always wanted to see Hyderabad even as a small kitten. "Daddy take me to Hyderabad, Daddy take me to Hyderabad. Daddy can we pay a visit to this Hyderabad for a few days tourism? Don't know why exactly, just always had a thing about it."

"Hyderabad?"

Ismet grimaced. He thought of it as a grimy, enfeebled, hillset city, sun-cudged, raisin-peopled, camel-walked, rain-drained.

"Oh, oh, wonderful city, wonderful city. Never been there myself but heard only the best about it. Best reports. Brother Yacoob, your uncle Yacoob, saw it on one occasion many years back. Never got over it. Never got over it, it is the most amazing thing. Still to this day he *is* always *talking* about it, always has a good word for it, Hyderabad has this, Hyderabad has that, in Hyderabad they know what is two and two, and so on. He'll be too happy when he hears you've gone. Always been crazy about Hyderabad. Where Khateja got the idea, I suppose."

TABLE 7. *Use of nonstandard be + -ing versus standard forms of verbs in The Wedding (chap. 3)*

|                           | <i>Be + -ing</i> | Standard forms<br>without <i>be + -ing</i> |
|---------------------------|------------------|--|
| Present habitual/stative  | 10               | 35   |
| Simple past               | 0                | 11   |
| Future                    | 0                | 2  |
| Imperatives               | 2                | 10   |
| With <i>to/let</i> , etc. | 0                | 2  |
| Modal auxiliaries         | 2                | 33   |

Dialect uses of *-ing* in *TW* are woven into a wider fabric of poetic language. The effect of such transformation of dialect into “poetic diction” is not to stereotype (as in *A&N*) or to be a faithful representation of a particular dialect (as in *LP*), but to transcend the particular. In this regard, the most noteworthy feature is the absence of bare *-ing* forms. Whenever *-ing* occurs in *TW*, it is accompanied by some form of *be*. Examples of *-ing* in the *TW* text are therefore entirely of an aspectual nature, capturing the well-known Indian English predilection for extension of progressive *-ing* to habitual and stative contexts (Trudgill & Hannah, 1985:110). Some examples of *be + -ing* in stative contexts are given next (all citations are taken from *TW*, chap. 3):

- (24) And he *is* still *wishing* to marry me.  
 (25) We *are* *wanting* you to look your best.  
 (26) You *are* *looking* so handsome.

It is also noticeable that Coovadia exploited the ambiguity in some *be + -ing* forms, where the construction can be taken as nonstandard or just about acceptable as colloquial standard. However, because from the viewpoint of formal standard English these do not take *be + -ing* in the sense intended, they are counted as habituais (27–28) or stative (29), rather than as progressives in Table 7.

- (27) She *is* always *talking* about it.  
 (28) That’s what they *are* *saying*.  
 (29) I’m *looking* forward to meeting it.

As Table 7 shows, the use of *be + -ing* is outnumbered by the use of simple past and present forms. *TW* has no instances of *be + -ing* for future, simple past, perfective, or habitual past. It does, however, occasionally use *be + -ing* after imperatives (30–31) and modals (32), with special effect:

- (30) Better *be* *kissing* that chicken goodbye.  
 (31) Do not *be* *forgetting* us, eh.  
 (32) Can’t *be* *squandering* the minutes. . .

TABLE 8. *Use of be + -ing progressives in three texts and two lects*

|                     | A&N         | Pre-bas     | LP           | Basilect      | TW         |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|------------|
| Present progressive | 0/70 (0.0%) | 2/8 (25.0%) | 8/11 (72.7%) | 6/10 (60.0%)  | 5/5 (100%) |
| Past progressive    | 0/3 (0.0%)  | 1/18 (5.6%) | 3/9 (33.3%)  | 15/21 (71.4%) | 2/2 (100%) |

The effect of sentences (24) to (32) is to stylize the Indianness of the thought processes, going back to the Marathi/Gujarati/Sindhi of the speakers, rather than to stigmatize incompetent English via bare *-ing* forms. This effect is strengthened by having the vast majority of these forms used variably with the standard form predominating, as shown in Table 7.

Standard present progressives ( $n = 5$ ) and past progressives ( $n = 2$ ) with *be + -ing* in *TW* are excluded from Table 7, but are included in Table 8, which gives a comparison of the proportion of *be + -ing* progressives to all progressives in the varieties studied in this article.

Table 8 shows a continuum in the use of *be + -ing* in all five varieties studied. *A&N*, which draws on and exaggerates pre-bas norms, steadfastly refuses to bestow any tokens of the standard variant on the speech of its main characters. At the other end, *TW* joyously acknowledges the use of *be + -ing* with all progressives (Table 8) and with some habituais/statives, as well (Table 7), in keeping with the norms of Indian English and SAIE. Intermediate figures occur in pre-bas, basilect, and *LP*, reflecting an interplay between bare *-ing* forms and *be + -ing* forms for the progressive. This situation is reflected in Figures 4A and 4B, which draw on Tables 5 and 6. These figures summarize the use of  $\emptyset + -ing$  in progressive use and nonprogressive use, respectively, in all the varieties studied in this article.

## CONCLUSION

By using actual speech data conducted under sociolinguistic conditions associated with the “Labovian interview” as a baseline, it is possible to assess the kinds of choices made by authors with different aims. In this article, I demonstrate the gross stereotyping effects of mock language or parody, showing how principles of variation are systematically violated in *A&N*. The six principles that emerge are the following:

- (a) A few variables are used to create a gross stereotype.
- (b) Each such variable is presented as if it is linguistically invariant in the dialect being stereotyped, as a nonstandard form (quantitative overgeneralization).
- (c) The variable is overgeneralized to neighboring (phonetic or grammatical) contexts in which it does not occur in the dialect being stereotyped (qualitative overgeneralization).
- (d) The variable is overgeneralized to cover the entire speech community (with a few possible exceptions) being stereotyped (social overgeneralization).

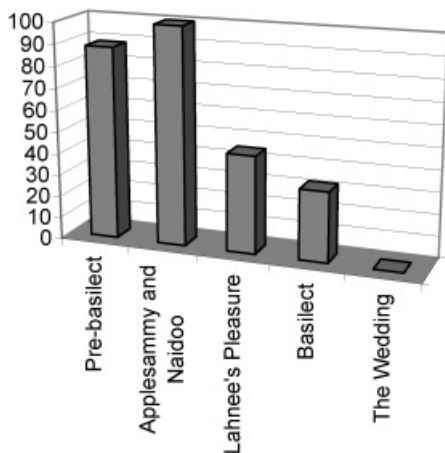


FIGURE 4A. Percentage of past and present progressive  $\emptyset + ing$  verb forms to total number of progressives in three texts and two lects.

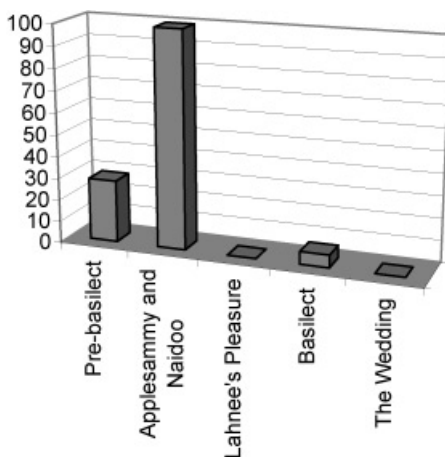


FIGURE 4B. Percentage of past and present nonprogressive  $\emptyset + ing$  verb forms to total number of verb forms in three texts and two lects.

(e) The variable is overgeneralized to cover all contexts of use, and thus to undo the effects of “audience design” (stylistic overgeneralization).

(f) The variable(s) may be embedded among other standard grammatical features (in contrast to the community’s actual norms) in the interests of intelligibility to the intended audience.

I also confirm that a text written by a writer with “insider” status may (unconsciously) replicate the principles of variation rather well, in the interests of real-

ism (see also Yaeger-Dror et al. 2002; Fonollosa, 1995). Finally, for contrastive purposes, I focussed on a post-modern, comic presentation that draws on dialect features and shows awareness of the variability of dialect grammar. At the same time, it transforms that grammar greatly, ending up with poetic language that transcends the nonstandard–standard divide. It also eschews the monostylishism promulgated by the stereotyping text.

## NOTES

1. Natal had not been a slave-holding colony, having been established in the 1840s. Historians attribute the need for an outside labor force to the initial reluctance of the indigenous Zulu people to commit to regular wage labor.
2. There are also latter day youngsters who attend private schools, in which the norms of white South African sociolinguistic networks are operative.
3. “Cultivated SAE,” also referred to as “Conservative SAE” (Lanham & Macdonald, 1979), is (or used to be) the preferred variety for serious broadcasting and speech making. In lower sociolects of SAE, however, the perfective meaning expressed in (4) is acceptable.
4. The number of sentences is given as approximate, as I did not count one-word interjections as single sentences, but incorporated them into sentences that they precede and with which they form a single discourse unit.
5. This comparison also irons out any possible effect of the SAIE dialect having developed over time. That is to say, the comparison covers the (dubious) possible objection that the equivalent of today’s basilectal speakers might have been pre-basilectal in the 1940s.
6. There are only a few exceptions in *A&N*: (a) verbs that take an *-it* ending (i.e., verb + cliticized object *it*). The most common verb here is *got*, which occurs invariantly as the fused form *gottit*. There is one additional example of *catchit*, as in “But did you catchit any fish master?” (b) the imperative prepositional verb *look at*, which occurs five times compared to the imperative form *looking at*, which occurs once; and the imperative verbs *mind* and *come on*; and (c) three tokens that I suspect show a scriptwriter or editor’s lapse rather than a genuine effort at showing variability: “You *broked* up; I wanting to *catch* that fish; When you feeling him *pull* this hand. . .”
7. This gerundive form is not counted in this study, because it serves an adjectival, not a verbal function.
8. Bhojpuri-Hindi *chokrī* “girl.”
9. The reasons for the absence of past habituais is interesting. This is the tense used for reminiscences and building histories (“*We used to . . .*”). The one-dimensional stereotypes in *A&N* do not allow for such building of a narrative.
10. With the single exception of *broked* as described in note 6.
11. Table 4 is therefore a revised, more constrained version of Table 3 in Mesthrie (2002:106), which gives the proportions for all occurrences of *be + -ing*.
12. There are two exceptions: two figures of authority or of expertise (a police corporal and a horse-racing expert) are given brief speaking parts in two chapters in rather stilted, colonial standard English.
13. The province itself is now known as KwaZulu-Natal.
14. Many people wrongly equate nonstandard dialect grammar and lexis with slang. It is therefore necessary to point out that the basilect has a grammatical coherence of its own; into which some speakers (typically young males) may insert slang words.
15. This rule may appear to be violated in two of Mothie’s basilectal sentences: *Wedding! Big, big wedding we’ll have* (p. 7) and *Little, little thing we worry about . . .* (p. 12). It is clear from the context, that although the nouns appear as singular, they are semantic plurals: “We used to have (very) big weddings”; “We worry about (such) small things.”
16. In this count I excluded present progressives with future meaning, as in *I’m coming just now*, which I place under present; futures with modal + *be* + *V* + *-ing* (*I’ll be standing next to you, man*) are excluded.

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