Minow, Verena. 2010. *Variation in the Grammar of Black South African English*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
ISBN: 9783631601488

The book *Variation in the Grammar of Black South African English* is based on the author's PhD thesis, which was supervised by Christiane Meierkord and completed in 2009 at the University of Münster, Germany. The motivation for the study stemmed from the scarcity of quantitative research on grammatical features of Black South African English (BSAE). In particular, the aim of the study was to determine how stable four selected morphosyntactic features of BSAE are by ascertaining, (a) whether they are used by BSAE speakers regardless of their proficiency level, and (b) if so, to what extent they are used. The features chosen for analysis are the inclusion vs. omission of past tense marking, the use of the progressive aspect (in particular the extension to stative verbs), the inclusion vs. omission of definite and indefinite articles, and the use of left dislocation. These features are mentioned as typical of BSAE in most previous accounts of the variety and are also found in many other New Englishes. At the same time, they are also characteristic of Learner Englishes.

The book's introductory chapter explains the aim and scope of the study and introduces the variety of Black South African English. In addition, the difference between a New English and a Learner English variety is discussed. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the linguistic situation of South Africa. It gives a brief historical sketch before discussing the current status of English in South Africa. The final section briefly introduces the other South African varieties of English. Chapter 3 gives an account of the linguistics of Black South African English. While the main focus lies on the description of the hitherto identified grammatical features of this variety, other aspects such as the phonology, the lexicon and discoursal features are also outlined.

Chapter 4 then introduces the data and methodology used in the study. In total, the investigated corpus comprises ca. 85,000 words of spoken BSAE. The data were collected by means of interviews (some individual but mostly group interviews with two to four informants) in Cape Town and Potchefstroom. The informants are mother-tongue speakers of Xhosa, Tswana, Southern Sotho, Venda and Zulu. The chapter provides extensive information about each individual informant and their respective language background and context of acquisition of English. The informants were classified into five groups according to where they can be placed on the lectal continuum: acrolectal speakers, upper mesolectal speakers, mid-mesolectal speakers, lower mesolectal speakers and basilectal speakers.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the analysis of the four selected features. An account of the previous findings concerning each feature is given and the procedure of analysis is explained before the results are presented in detail. The final chapter then discusses the stability of the analysed features and provides some suggestions for further research.

The analyses show that the investigated features are used by speakers of BSAE regardless of their proficiency level. However, there are considerable differences concerning the frequency of occurrence of these features. Frequent omission of past tense marking (inclusion rates of 60% or less) is clearly a basilectal feature. Concerning the use of the progressive aspect, there is a clear correlation of proficiency level and frequency of use of the progressive, but an extension to truly stative verbs such as *be* and *have* is only rarely encountered. The inclusion rates for the definite as well as the indefinite article are overall very high and article omission is hence judged to be a marginal feature, even among lower mesolectal and basilectal speakers. Left dislocation is used by acrolectal speakers, though only infrequently (about once per 1,000 words). It is a more pervasive feature among lower mesolectal and basilectal speakers, who are more likely to use it more than five times per 1,000 words.

doi:10.1017/S0266078412000533
 