

# EXPLAINING SPEECH DIVERSITY IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING SOUTH AFRICA

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The important part of the title of these talks is the word 'diversity' and I must explain what I mean by it. It is obvious to anyone observant of their society that people who live in more or less the same community don't speak the same language in the same way. Let me provide some examples. In my youth in the Cape some people going to what today might be called the pictures, or the movies, called it the bioscope, others the cinema. In fact, bioscope was a word to be avoided by those who used cinema. This is an example of diversity in vocabulary and today we have added the movies, the pictures or the flicks. These different ways of naming the same thing are always with us. Do you ever say bioscope? There are still people who do.

Here is an example of diversity in the grammar of sentences: Some South-African-English speakers can quite easily say: 'Have you got', or 'Did you put', that is, without a noun following these particular verbs. Others never say this and would probably condemn it as a mistake in grammar. More revealing in the matter of the particular place of an individual in these patterns of speech diversity, and more important because they are so difficult to hide, are variables in pronunciation. While we can and do change our habits of pronunciation as we go through life, these habits are much more deep-seated in our nervous systems than grammar or vocabulary, and more difficult to displace. In fact, there is

much research evidence to show that after the age of puberty we might succeed in adopting a new pattern of pronunciation in whole or part; but we will never erase from our minds the old pattern. It is always lurking below the surface of everyday speech and likely to reappear in times of old age, or when under stress or anxiety, or simply in casual situations when our guard is down. Let us examine some variables in pronunciation in English-speaking South African society. There are four different ways of pronouncing the vowel *ai* as in *nine*, *time*, *nice*. In certain sectors of our society you will hear it pronounced [â>ɪ]. In others we will hear the diphthong *ai* pronounced differently. There are at least three other ways.

1. (Afrikaans English) [ai].
2. (Natal English) [aʔ:].
3. (Cape English) [v:]. (Ja, we had a nice time there.)

There is a good deal to explain about diversity in a speech community and the forces which promote it; there are important questions to be answered in such an explanation which I will attempt to answer as I progress in these talks. Let me first draw attention to the significance of diversity in any sociological understanding of society. Notice that even without actually seeing a person, but hearing him or her speak, we are usually able to place the person in some social group which might be identified by age, sex, social class or descent group (for example, Afrikaans or English descent in our society). And more than that, this identification evokes expectations as to how the person speaking will behave under certain conditions and even his or her beliefs and attitudes, his or her political and religious affiliations and so on. These, in turn, arouse in us attitudes towards the speaker. We know, of course, that we can be quite wrong in the expectations aroused by a manner of speech. These will be subject to correction, and often are corrected as our acquaintance with the person advances. But this stereotyping of social types is as natural as the division of society into social groups. It is, of course, something to be understood and controlled.

Now let us turn to some of the facts about speech behaviour and speech differences and to some of the questions to be answered in order to explain diversity in the speech community.

Children acquire their behaviour patterns by imitating others - their parents, their brothers and sisters, their peers. This is quite obvious to anyone observing a child growing up in the family and society. If not obvious to you, it is nevertheless clearly revealed in sociolinguistic research that most children change

their manner of speech at particular ages; for example, when the child finds companionship in the playground thereby making his first move out of the family into the wider society. Such changes are obviously made in imitation of others. Compare also changes in other types of behaviour: changes in style of dress and the length of hair. When we talk of norms in behaviour, which are the average, common behaviours of a group, we are talking about the consequences of this tendency to pattern our behaviour on the behaviours of others who, to use a technical term, act as a reference group. That group provides us with reference figures to whom we are attracted. Notice that coercion may not necessarily be involved; there is some deeper motivation involved in this imitating. With all this imitating going on, and so much exposure to the behaviour of all other groups in society through the pervasive communication media of the modern world, we might ask the question: How is diversity maintained? What are the forces that promote it? This leads to other interesting questions: Why do some people in one definable social group imitate the behaviour of people in another group in which they don't normally participate, while the rest of their own group make no attempt to do this? Another question: in most societies of our acquaintance, certainly English-speaking societies, one particular pattern of speech usually associated with one particular social group carries the social meaning of prestige, correctness, good education, which gives social and economic advantage to its users. (This incidentally is usually referred to as the standard.- we often speak of standard English.) How does one pattern of speech achieve this over others? You might believe that there is a simple answer to this by saying that it is the speech of the power group in society. But this is not necessarily true: in some Arab societies it is the speech of the rural peasant that connotes prestige higher than that of the wealthy and powerful sections of their society.

I have raised some important questions relating to speech diversity, but have provided no answers to them. These will come mainly in the last of this series of talks. Let us examine speech diversity in our society a little more deeply.

I have given some examples of different patterns of speech from our society and have obviously been speaking of dialect or accent differences. These differences are associated with different social groups. My attempt to explain diversity will be in terms of South African society and I must now get down to identifying dialects, accents and the social groups which use them. Limits on time confine my discussion mainly to mother.tongue speakers of English, thereby excluding groups of English users whose characteristic speech patterns are rather more obvious. I will not, therefore, be referring to the forms and roles of the English of

the Indian and Coloured communities, and of black South Africans, in the total pattern of diversity in the South African society.

The most obvious explanation of different ways of speaking English in different social groups lies in the different historical origins of such groups. One generation obviously transmits something of its norms of speech to the next generation, although we must recognize the strong tendency of children after the age of nine or ten to imitate their peers rather than their parents. If, however, the group through its different age grades is relatively homogeneous and not much mixed with other descent groups, then their accent or dialect is likely to be maintained through succeeding generations. In such groups no prominent alternatives in accent or dialect are offered to young children. Here is a pertinent example from our own society: For two, possibly three generations in the last century, the accent of the young and old in all social classes in the smaller towns and rural areas of the Eastern Cape was fairly uniform in what I would call Cape English. That society was fairly self-contained. Among the reasons why it is not so any longer is the greatly increased population mobility of this century and access to the speech of wider society through the media such as radio, films and television.

Are there distinct regional dialects or accents in South Africa which might be explained by the different historical origins of the original settlement in these regions? Today the answer to this question must be a qualified 'Yes'. Going back to before the Second World War and into the last century, the answer would be a rather more confident 'yes'. We have evidence of the English-speakers of Natal, for example, recognizing Cape English as different from their own speech - and not being very complimentary about it. We will look at some of the differences between Cape English and Natal English, which are still quite marked today amongst older people. I shall try to explain these differences in terms of the history of the English settlements in the Cape and Natal.

The first indigenous South African English of mother-tongue speakers originates in the vernacular developed in the childhood peer groups of over 1 000 under-twelve children of the 1820 Settlers who settled in the Eastern Cape. There were many dialects among that first intrepid group of Settlers who had cut their ties with Britain and were settling themselves in Africa. There were differences to the extent that the speech of a fellow Settler was sometimes unintelligible to others. From the records about half the group appears to be from London and the Home Countries which surround London. Weight of numbers therefore brought a predominance of working-class or lower-middle-class

London speech to the ears of children in those early farm schools around Grahamstown and Bathurst and into the playgrounds of schools in those towns. This group provides an excellent example of how quickly norms develop in a group of children of mixed backgrounds drawn together in a common social life. Among the forces which levelled out social and behavioural differences in that society were the stressful conditions of a hard frontier life experienced by a threatened and impoverished society. We have good evidence that within one generation a homogeneous local speech had developed among the children of the 1820 Settlers. This evidence comes from very old people interviewed in the 1950's who remembered the speech of grandparents who were the children of the original 1820 Settlers. Some of the characteristic pronunciation features which mark Cape English can be readily identified in their London origin. To anyone acquainted with that accent they sound like Cockney. Let us look now at some features of the Cape English accent and their origins.

George Bernard Shaw who had great interest in phonetics, hence *Pygmalion* (later *My Fair Lady*), in spelling out the Cockney alphabet showed the letter *r* as *aw* [ɔ:]. Pronunciation of the long vowel *a* in *part* and *arm*, and, of course, the name of the consonant *r*, to sound like the vowel of *court* or *short*, is reflected in Jeremiah Goldswain's diary where this illiterate but enterprising young Settler wrote *gorden* for *garden*, obviously pronouncing it [ɔ:].

The pronunciation of the long vowel *a* is one defining feature of English in the Eastern Cape to be explained by the regional origin of the manner of speech of the early settlers. Incidentally, it probably spread into Afrikaans at an early date, as in the pronunciation of *Ja* [jɔ:] and *kaas* [kɔ:s].

Another Cape English feature is the pronunciation of the diphthong (which is a combination of two vowel sounds) *o* in *go*, *so*, *row*. Although this pronunciation is different from Afrikaans and hence Afrikaans English - which is a distinct local accent - many people in this country cannot distinguish the Cape English *o* [əu] from Afrikaans English [ʌ<sup>v</sup>].

Earlier I referred to the diphthong *ai* of *nice*, *time*, *my* as having four different pronunciations in South Africa according to region and social group. In Cape English this vowel is very similar to the Cockney pronunciation and again quite different from Afrikaans English. The people of Natal earlier in this century used to talk about the 'sort of Afrikaans English' of the Cape and in certain respects they were correct in this. We can identify certain features of Cape English as having their origin in Dutch.

The Cape Settlers had a good deal of contact with Dutch-speaking (more correctly Afrikaans-speaking) descendants of the first South African colonists scattered throughout the Eastern Cape, particularly before the Great Trek. There was a certain amount of intermarriage, mainly with Settler sons marrying Afrikaans-speaking women. Afrikaans is thus the origin of the characteristic Cape pronunciation of the consonant *r* in words like *red*, *cream*, *Grahamstown*. This isn't quite the same pronunciation as the Afrikaans *r* which is phonetically a rolled or trilled *r*. But it cannot be traced to Britain; there isn't an *r* quite like this in any British dialect. It is, in fact, an Englishman's attempt at imitating an Afrikaans *r* probably in the speech of his wife in those early English-Afrikaner marriages. This prominent *r* is almost never encountered amongst older people with their roots and origins in Natal, and this is a convenient point to have a look at Natal English and its origins.

We have considered the pronunciation of the vowel (strictly speaking the diphthong) *ai* of *nine*, *nice*, *fine* in Cape English and in Afrikaans English. Now let us consider the pronunciation in Natal English of the diphthong *ai* as in *diamond*, *mines*, *piles*. The second part of the diphthong, which is the vowel sound *i*, is almost entirely lost leaving a long *ar* sound: *narn* as against *nine*. In one of the first surveys of English accents in Britain a phonetician named Ellis, who published his book in 1889, located this pronunciation of *ai* in quite a restricted area - mainly Yorkshire and part of Lancashire. The music-hall version of the Lancashire accent has this pronunciation quite prominently. (You might have heard the old record of Stanley Holloway reciting 'Our Albert' in which one hears of 'the larn which ate Albert'.) Consider also the Natal English pronunciation of *industry* as [ɒndəstri]. This pronunciation of *i* as [ə] is a North-of-England, and of course, a Scottish-English feature. It is evidence of this kind which leads to the assumption that the settlement of Natal drew extensively from Yorkshire, Lancashire and the North generally - as the 1820 settlement drew on South-East of England. In this assumption you would be correct. A recent publication on the first Natal settlers states that 'Many Yorkshiremen came to Natal'. Another marker of Natal English, not quite so easy to confine to a geographical area in Britain, is the pronunciation of vowels immediately preceding the consonant *l*. This following consonant influences the vowel and draws it into the back of the mouth, giving pronunciation such as *bell* [bæl], *cold* [kɒld], *pill* [pɪl]. Another typical Natal pronunciation is the long vowel [ɜ:] of *girl*, *herd*, *Durban*, which is pronounced with a high tongue position and some rounding of the lips, giving [ɜ̣ɜ̣l, hɜ̣d, dɜ̣bən]. This feature probably comes from North-East England.

Now let us consider briefly the history of the settlement of Natal, with the focus on how different it was from that of the Cape. I have mentioned that the majority of the settlers arriving in Natal between 1848 and the late 1860's were from the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland, whereas in the Cape the majority came within reach of London. There was also a social-class difference. Hattersley, the well-known Natal historian, wrote that Pietermaritzburg in the 1880's was a city of impecunious aristocrats and Natal generally swarmed with half-pay and retired officers of the Army and Navy. Among the 1820 Settlers in the Cape, on the other hand, the majority were working or lower-middle-class. The key-note of the social mind of Natal was the desire to remain English and retain what they could of the form of society they had known in Victorian England. Forces similar to those that had simplified the social order and life-style of the Cape settlers had far less impact in Natal. There were no frontier wars in the strict sense, less impoverishment, far less contact with the Afrikaner (most had moved away after annexation of the Colony); but a higher density of population, ready access to fashion-setting urban centres, a great diversity in occupation and wealth, and social distinction based on position and rank. Given these differences, it is not surprising that Natal English of the last century showed no influence at all from Afrikaans.

The clear difference between Cape English and Natal English and their associations with those particular regions are, as I have said, more a fact of 50 years or more ago than today. Turning to the present day, let me survey patterns of diversity in accents in South Africa as we experience them. I have spoken of Cape English, Natal English and Afrikaans English. I must add another accent, Conservative South African English, which is close to Standard Southern British English and does not show the typically South African features of the other accents with any prominence. This accent is in the process of disappearing and is very much the speech of a generation over 50 years of age. Other social factors which predict Conservative South African English are: high social status; recent British descent; or having been educated in one of the top eight private schools in this country before the Second World War. It is, of course, still the speech of radio and TV news announcers and also the English of serious drama on the professional stage. It is for many, but not all, South Africans the standard, which means it is regarded as the model of correct speech expected of important people in the English community saying serious things. The pronunciation of the majority of the under-twenty-five age group combines features of pronunciation from Cape English (not necessarily the most salient ones) and from Natal English. Today

these might be regarded as making a general SA English. Some of the most characteristic of Cape English features are less and less in evidence today. Generally, Natal English is advancing in white SA society and Cape English is receding. Let me give you the empirical evidence of this and some idea how this sort of evidence is obtained. It comes mainly from a survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in 1973. This survey selected randomly every 1 in 375 names on the voters' roll in cities and towns with a white population of over ten thousand. The person concerned was interviewed and his or her speech recorded. These voices, together with my own surveys of old settler descendants from the Cape and Natal, yield the following kind of information. First, the retreat of salient characteristics of Cape English: One Cape variable, the pronunciation of *r*, has withdrawn from the speech of women in the Eastern Cape to the extent that there are 50% fewer users of it in the 18 - 44 age group compared with women over 70. Taking all salient features of Cape English in the total sample from all parts of South Africa, we find that 70% of men over 45 in 1973 had one or more Cape English features with some degree of prominence, but only 55% in the 18 - 44 age group. Among women, the equivalent figures are 51% of the 45 and older group, and 41% in the younger group.

Concerning the spread of the Natal English features in white SA society generally (particularly outside Natal), women provide the leading edge of change particularly in the pronunciation of the vowel *ai* as [a]. In samples of Johannesburg women, the 18 - 24 year-olds have three times more of this pronunciation than the 55 - 64 year-olds. In the total Witwatersrand sample, Natal English features in some degree of prominence have doubled among females younger than 45 in 1973, compared to those over 45. Among men the equivalent gain is about 25%. Typical Cape English is today most prominent among blue-collar workers on the Witwatersrand and among older people in the Eastern Cape and Cape Midlands. Pure Natal English has in our survey been located in 33% of women in the 45 - 70 age group in Natal and in about 20% of women, old and young, on the Witwatersrand.

In turning to Conservative SA English which many accept as standard English in this country, we note that this accent is largely independent of region, but is rare in predominantly Afrikaans towns and cities. In Afrikaans English, the fourth accent type I have named, the transfer of features of Afrikaans pronunciation is obvious and extensive. This accent is more likely to be heard in predominantly Afrikaans-speaking areas and among those who have weak social ties with English-speaking South Africans.



I shall now attempt to explain how the different varieties of English in SA have come to exist and what maintains them in the continuing state of language diversity of our community. In doing this I will be offering explanations as to why people speak the way they do; which is, of course, to explain the diversity of speech in society in terms of the social and psychological forces which promote it. Here is a list of some of the questions to be answered specifically in reference to our society:

- Why did the English of the working-or lower-middle-class of the London area emerge and survive as a dialect of the first major English settlement in the Eastern Cape at the expense of the many other dialects of the 1820 Settlers?
- How did the 1820 Settler children acquire through imitation, a way of pronouncing the consonant *r* similar to that of the Afrikaners with whom mainly adults had contact, and that only occasionally?
- And why are their great-grandchildren now getting rid of that pronunciation in what appears to be a general retreat from the old Cape English?
- As a supplement to the last question we need to ask: Why has Natal English spread from Natal like a linguistic veld-fire sweeping over the most populous, industrialised part of South Africa? Why is it particularly women who are caught up in the spread of a form of English originally located in Natal?
- Why the reverence for Standard Southern British English as a standard of correctness in South Africa when even Britain no longer maintains this attitude? (Compare the speech of serious radio and TV announcers on the BBC with our own news readers.) Australia, our nearest linguistic relative, has never had anything of this.
- And now a significant, but more general question: We obviously learn by imitating one another. Then why, in the age of the mass media when radio and television expose all groups to the speech of all other groups, and spatial mobility intersperses social groups, do we still have diversity in speech in South Africa with little evidence of its disappearing?

We will attempt to answer the first question by explaining dialectal levelling which takes place in a heterogeneous immigrant population brought together in a new speech community. This is what happened in the first generation born in the Eastern Cape and was repeated in the new society created on the diamond and

gold fields later in the century. Consider the first children's society in the Eastern Cape with a diversity of speech corresponding to 25 or more different dialects of adults. In a group with a powerful conformity imperative such as the peer groups of the playground, imitative behaviour is directed at power figures in the group. Remember that the group we are speaking of exists in a tough frontier society with danger abounding for children as well as adults. The main attributes of power figures under these conditions are physical prowess and likeability; working class children are more likely to excel in the former. Another factor we can't ignore, of course, is, simply, weight of numbers. There were more children from the lower-than-middle stratum and more from around London than from anywhere else. Those familiar with Cockney might well ask: What has happened to the dropping of h's and the loss of final *g* in words ending with *ing* ('e 'urt 'is 'and, goin' and comin')?

These have survived in Australia to some degree but apparently not here. There are several points to make in trying to find an answer to this question. Many of the Settlers coming from a Britain impoverished by the Napoleonic wars and their aftermath were poor but respectable in the sense of having a nineteenth century awareness of social status and a readiness to rank people according to it. Improving and bettering themselves socially in nineteenth century terms was part of the motivation for coming to Africa. They were, for example, offered the ownership of land which was the hallmark of an English gentleman. Aspiring to higher social status usually goes hand in hand with efforts to acquire the behaviours of the next highest social stratum. Such behaviour obviously includes speech. Efforts made to acquire the speech of a higher social-status group of which one is not a member, frequently results in the correction of the most obviously stigmatized features of the low-status speech pattern while many characteristic features of that speech pattern are overlooked. In technical terms the latter are said to be below the level of social awareness. This seems to have been the case with the dropping of h's and g's which must have been prominent in the speech of probably the majority of adult 1820 Settlers. Early schoolmasters in the Eastern Cape would have been concerned with the teaching of the proprieties of middle-class behaviour and the dropping of h's and g's probably received special attention while many other features of the stigmatized accent remained.

Continuing with our focus on the individual and what happens to his or her speech as he or she progresses through the 'ages of man', we note that probably the majority of us do not speak in the same way at the age of 21 as we did when we were ten. Obviously we have learnt more language during this period, but I

do not mean this. My reference is to accents - we don't pronounce words in the same way. There is much evidence to indicate that many young people in their middle teens shift from one speech pattern to another. Most often the shift is towards what is regarded as more prestigious speech and, therefore, in the direction of what the society accepts as the standard form of the language. Girls seem to be more assiduous in making this shift than boys are. The observation I have just made must, however, be qualified. There are not insignificant numbers of children - in particular, young South African men - from families of middle or higher social status with extensive exposure to standard English in private schools who, in the age of 'social perception' (broadly the middle and late teens), modify their speech in the direction of the highly stigmatized present-day version of Cape English. In order to understand this phenomenon we need to answer the question: Why do we imitate the speech of others?

The teenager switching his accent, even his vocabulary and grammar, towards that of another social group in which he is not necessarily a participant, is obviously acting under a social force or pressure of some kind. This phenomenon is certainly not confined to South Africa. Within a generation or two since the last war the speech of the upper-middle-class in Britain has come to sound more and more like working-class London English with the abandoning of the norms of Standard Southern British English by the very people who would in earlier generations have maintained them.

Before offering an explanation of these shifts in speech behaviour in the age of social perception, it is important to realize that different accents in our, or any, society convey different social meaning. Manners of speech are powerful symbols of social values associated with different ethnic and descent groups. Social values are, in my definition, beliefs about right and proper states in the world and in society. There is good empirical evidence from our society of the clear perception of the social meaning of accent. In an experiment conducted some seven years ago a large number of English and Afrikaans-speaking university students in Johannesburg were asked to match four different voices with different accents to different types of social behaviour and personality attributes. Each vignette of social behaviour presented to the subjects was representative of a social value. For example, masculinity and gregariousness were represented in the behaviour of the captain of the local rugby team in the men's bar. Let me give you the findings of that experiment in brief. The speaker on the tape giving a form of Cape English - the most typically local English speech in South Africa - was seen as socially gregarious, physically tough and

manly, and disdainful of the proprieties of behaviour. But he was not a leader; he was uneducated and of low social status. The speaker of Standard Southern British English, on the other hand, was seen as well-educated and sophisticated, of high social status and as one possessing the attributes of leadership.

I return now to my explanation of changes in speech behaviour in the late and middle teens, against the background of what I have said of the social meaning of accent. The adolescent, while drawing away from the adult world which has nurtured him, in the middle and later adolescent years gives every evidence of anticipating adult roles and entry to adult society at a desired point in its structure. This coincides with growing awareness of the wider society which, in its structure and organisation, and the social meaning of its relationships and categories, unfolds quite rapidly for him. Through increasing exposure to it, he sees the social system in more complete perspective in the last years of this age. Understanding the social system means acquiring the kind of social information conveyed by dialects and accents which I have referred to. Speech provides a medium for such meanings as social status, social values and stereotyped personal attributes extending to intelligence, integrity, kindness, etc. A good deal of the dynamics of society underlying and promoting linguistic diversity is revealed in the shifting speech patterns of adolescents whose personal values and desired identity might, for example, motivate her to seek higher social status or, conversely, might motivate him to imitate the extreme behaviours of the tough and manly social type I call 'typical local man'. This discussion of shifting speech habits in adolescence provides part of the explanation of continuing diversity in the speech community because attraction to an external reference group is as much an individual as a group response. The motivation to change arises in the individual choice between alternatives offered in the society and is determined by what social identity or personal attributes he or she desires for himself or herself. Another part of the explanation of maintained speech diversity lies in the inherent instability of social behaviour generally. Social behaviour, including speech patterns, is always in a state of flux. It is in the nature of social man to innovate, or at least be caught up in innovation, and, hence, change. At this moment seeds of change are located anywhere and everywhere in society, for example, in a slight shift in an individual pronunciation of a vowel or consonant, or in the creating of a new meaning, a new word or expression. If these catch on, the changes will spread through society, possibly to become a norm of young people in the immediate social group, but not of older people who will know, and possibly use, the old and new as alternatives. From them the

change may spread to other social groups. So the continuing process of change in language combined with the various ways in which different age groups receive a change reinforces diversity in the speech community. Part of the explanation of continuing speech diversity lies also in the nature of the forces which motivate imitative behaviour. In the adolescent years the tendency to adopt other models of behaviour (in technical terms, to find a reference group outside one's own immediate social group) is very strong. One is attracted to an external reference group by virtue of the social values to which one has allegiance; the external reference group may be identified as those who appear to meet, in their observable social lives, your values rather better than you do. If, therefore, your values are upper-middle-class in a Victorian sense, you will value high social status and associate a sense of quality or excellence with it. You will also value highly the proprieties of the behaviours it prescribes; hence you will be exclusive in social relations and be concerned with keeping people of lesser quality out. Prescribing a manner of speech is, of course, a highly effective way of practising exclusion. If, on the other hand, you value collectivism, which is a strong value in African society, and apparently in modern Israel, your values and hence your attitudes and behaviours will be the very opposite of the middle-class values I have described. It is necessary to remember that young people, except possibly in low-status social groups, are able to move as individuals in adopting social values, and, hence, to find different reference figures.

But it is, of course, more complex than this. Quite different is the case of the individual who becomes a member of a tightly integrated group usually low in status or social power. Such groups tend to enforce the conformity imperative. Punishment in some form is meted out to members who do not adopt group norms in behaviour and attitudes. Under coercion, therefore, and not by virtue of what the person values, is he likely to adopt the behaviours of the group. A researcher in New York observing the typically local accent of a middle-class lawyer living in the working-class of the Lower East Side, asked him about the accent he had obviously adopted. The answer was: 'I have to talk like this. I couldn't live around here unless I did'. There is another important characteristic of social groups such as the working class, army conscripts and others which are strongly coercive in the matter of group norms. These are groups least likely to be attracted to external reference figures. In valuing toughness, masculinity, independence and a disdain for prescribed etiquettes they are satisfied in being as they are - they have a highly valued group identity in spite of the stigma which the rest of the society assigns to it. This strong

integrative tendency has a stabilizing effect on social behaviour; working-class speech tends to be maintained through generations and age grades with less change than middle-class speech where we have noted a good deal of instability.

In this discussion of the complex of social forces determining speech behaviour, you will find reasons for continuing diversity in patterns of speech in the societies with which we are familiar. No foreseeable social change is likely to change this state.

Against the background of understanding at least some of the social forces determining speech behaviour, I turn now to questions relating to present day speech patterns in South Africa: the advance of Natal English and the retreat from Cape English; the continuing reverence for Standard British English which in somewhat modified form is still in fact the standard for South Africa. Until the 1880's Cape English provided the norm for English speech in the fairly homogeneous society in which it has evolved. This society, and that of Natal, was comparatively self-contained. English in Natal was not only different from that of the Cape; there were internal differences. Standard British English was being retained fairly effectively by those who had claim to high social status while a uniform Natal English was being established as the norm elsewhere in the society.

In the 1880's however, the consequences of the discovery of gold and diamonds began to take effect and these were to change the face of South Africa economically, politically and socially; social change is, of course, our main concern. The mineral revolution of the last quarter of the nineteenth century brought immigrants to South Africa in far greater numbers than before - mainly from Britain, but including refugees from Eastern Europe whose descendants play a significant role in South African society today. Colonials of British descent from the Cape and Natal flocked to the mining towns. The traditions of the Afrikaner kept him on the land, thus countering the attractions of the mining cities; but Afrikaners in fair numbers, mainly those who had not prospered on the land, sought work in Johannesburg in particular.

As the mining city on the gold fields acquired social and economic stability, the pattern of the 'new society' in South Africa emerged, based on the industrial society of Britain familiar to many of the new immigrants. The dynamics of the society were the pursuit of wealth and social status, the former being the initial primary drive, the latter a natural consequence in nineteenth century industrial society. Statusful occupation, wealth and material possessions were now available to provide the

full range of social differentials in a class society in a way they had never been in the colonies of the Cape or Natal. The mining plutocracy, more or less identified with the great mining houses in Johannesburg, were the aristocrats 'prepared to consort with doctors, lawyers, engineers and architects, but to have little truck with the rest'. (Thelma Gutsche, *No Ordinary Woman*) They came eventually to control the economy of South Africa, and also exercised social control within the society - with the firm support of their wives. The mining plutocracy maintained their exclusiveness in ways familiar in Britain, which was the target of their social ambitions and the model of their social behaviour. All were not British, however; many would not have qualified for the upper-class in Britain. But social mobility was a feature of the mining society and released the forces of social aspiring powerfully within it. We know, for example, that the great mining magnate Barney Barnato, of humble Cockney origin, hired an English schoolmaster to teach him the niceties of upper-class behaviour which extended, no doubt, to upper-class speech. The dominant social values of this new society were typically Victorian, linking prestige with social status and the latter with the acquired attributes of occupation, wealth and material possessions. These social values were established, maintained and transmitted by immigrants well acquainted with them in Britain and Europe. They included upper-class genteelness and British nationalism strongly symbolized by the Queen and Empire. Louis Cohen, an early pioneer and insightful commentator on the Johannesburg scene early in this century wrote: 'Johannesburg ... is very British ... loyal to Empire ... with English manners and traditions enshrined.'

A feature of British 'top-dog' attitudes practised in the society was the denigration of what was obviously local and the ascription of quality and excellence to what was British. This extended to the 'colonial', who was rated socially inferior to those who were 'home-born'. There were, therefore, many colonials striving to be 'English'. A British tradition in social values dominated English society in South Africa which in many ways was a denial of values of the Settlers particularly of the Cape and their Afrikaner co-frontiersmen.

The 'colonials' from the Cape and Natal entered the mining society variously according to social background and education. The average Cape Settler descendant was not well placed in the demonstrable social attributes, and in this respect was lumped with the Afrikaner who was obviously at a disadvantage in trying to secure a place in the mining society. A fair number of Cape colonials in the mining cities found their way into the lower ranks of society lacking artisan skills, education and social attributes. The social image of 'typically local man' was,

therefore, not good in the mining society and social stigma became associated with this stereotype and his manner of speech. As I demonstrated earlier, the speech of this stereotype still conveys social stigma and the reasons for it are not difficult to find remembering that the mining-industrial society, the 'new society' as I have called it, has set the pattern for norms and attitudes in English-speaking society in South Africa. The Natalian, in contrast to the average Cape colonial, moved into the mining-industrial society with distinct advantages. Natalspruit (a placename on the Witwatersrand) originates in the name of a mining camp in early Johannesburg, providing evidence of the separate identity given to the Natalian - no such name exists for Cape colonials. He was more obviously English, and likely to proclaim the fact; more likely to control approved middle-class behaviour. Britain and what it represented were not as far in his past as they were for the Cape Settler descendant. Men from Natal, but more significantly women, could move directly into the higher ranks of society on no other qualification than their social competence and the middle- or upper-class British identity they proclaimed. Louis Cohen, in his reference to the 'fashion and passion of the day' congregated at the race-course in early Johannesburg, singles out 'The sweet Natalians with their abundant hair and deep black eyes that partake of the sunny brilliance of the Garden Colony.' No other social type receives such approbation from Louis Cohen.

I have given evidence of the spread of Natal English to the mining-industrial cities and even the Eastern Cape where there is evidence of women acquiring features of Natal speech early in the century. It seems that in the formative years of the new society many English-speaking South Africans who lacked close associations with Britain accepted as a local standard accent a speech pattern which was basically Natal English. This is particularly true of women in the Eastern European descent group and I will use this group in an explanation of how features of Natal speech have come to acquire a social meaning of high social status and have been spread through the forces of social aspiring.

The Natalian in the early mining society became a local substitute for the authentic Englishman among those who lacked sensitivity as to the detail of upper-class English behaviour. The Natalian in the schools and the wider society was the accessible model of socially acclaimed 'Englishness' to those who could not move into the ranks of Thelma Gutsche's 'aristocrats'.

The Eastern European immigrants were distinctly disadvantaged in the matter of conforming to the behavioural norms of the society. Although generally well-educated and well placed in the skills of



business and economic life, they could not convert economic success into social advancement. For a generation or more they lived beyond the pale in a society whose power group was not tolerant of the foreign identity. The first generation of children growing up in this descent group were undoubtedly made aware of the social values of the society into which they had come to live, but once they were socially aware they would recognize that their parents were not a model for shaping their behaviour. In seeking such a model in school and early social life a good number probably found it in the Natalian. Upward social mobility has been a feature of the Eastern European group (they have more than twice the number of university graduates than the English-speaking community as a whole) and the acquired English behaviour of the first generation to grow up in this society have passed it to later generations and, as they have merged into the power group in South African society, they have actually served to propagate it. Obviously the Eastern European descent group have not been the only ones reacting to the social meaning of the original Natal English in this way. Those taking features of what might be termed Respectable South African English (basically Natal English) into their own speech have in many cases given up the more salient of Cape English features, and this accounts for the diminishing quantity of Cape English in our society.

The reverence for British English can be explained by recognizing that the positive attitudes to things British which developed in the new society, have persisted to the present day, in at least some sectors of the English-speaking society. We must remember that Standard British English is becoming more and more remote in this society and only available for imitation by a few with close associations with Britain. It is, hence, something we are likely to demand in others but which most of us cannot provide ourselves. It continues to have pre-eminence in status among the changing patterns of diversity in English speech in South Africa.

Directly or indirectly I have answered, or at least attempted to, the questions which arise when trying to explain diversity in speech in a community said to speak the same language. The community I have been concerned with is our own English-speaking society in South Africa. I have found some of the answers to the questions posed, in the social forces and pressures that make their impact on all of us as we grow up in society. Other answers have come from the history of our society, and from the diverse consequences of this history.