Focus on South Africa
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English in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi

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1. Introduction

Although the number of articles and even books on English in Africa has increased over the last few years, there are still many under-researched regions (cf. Burchfield 1994). Among them are Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, three landlocked countries ‘in the heart of Africa’. The region was seen as a unity and collectively called Central Africa in colonial and the first post-colonial days, but soon the economic and political differences proved too great and the unity was lost. Whereas Zambia and Malawi had gained black majority rule by 1964, Zimbabwe, formerly (South) Rhodesia, had to wait until 1980. In 1990 Namibia and finally in 1994 the Republic of South Africa followed suit. Now that all these political changes with the resulting economic, educational and linguistic repercussions have reached the entire region, a new critical re-assessment of the region’s potential is appropriate. This contribution serves a triple purpose:

1. It draws attention to a region that might be overlooked between South and East Africa, also in (socio-)linguistic terms, and reports on lessons from the past and possibilities for the future, which may also be interesting for neighbouring countries - not least for South Africa.

2. Mainly, this contribution gives a brief state-of-the-art summary as a starting-point for further research. Unfortunately, apart from (unpublished) American and British Ph.D. theses (e.g. Chisanga 1987) and several smaller articles in international journals (e.g. McGinley 1987), only national journals and other internal publications (e.g. Communication Skills Centre 1993) report on ongoing research - and with the present-day socio-economic hardships they tend to be less prominent than in the ‘good old days’.

3. In addition, this article scrutinises the concept of Central African English by asking to what extent sociolinguistic and linguistic features justify the
concept of a special cluster of varieties in the sense of an intermediate group between East and South Africa or whether it would be more appropriate in linguistic terms to promote the concept of Southern African English - relating to varieties that are heavily influenced by developments in South Africa, in the positive as well as in the negative sense.

2. Colonial History

The history of English in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi follows the history of European colonial penetration. This brought the native African population under the influence of three very different groups of whites: the missionaries, the miners and the settlers.

The most important early European to come to Central Africa was the Scottish missionary David Livingstone in the middle of the 19th century. After his death in Zambia in 1873 the London Missionary Society and the Churches of Scotland sent missionaries to the area to continue his work. The names Livingstone and Blantyre (named after Livingstone's birthplace in Scotland) in Nyasaland (present-day Malawi) bear witness to this development. Although Blantyre was founded first, in 1876, the Livingstone mission, which was established in 1879, became more important not only for Malawi but also for Zambia, especially through its work in education. In terms of language it became important that its support of the regional lingua franca Tumbuka against the colonial administration and the national lingua franca Nyanja helped to establish the major divisions that are still felt today. The printing press in Livingstone added to the Tumbuka success by producing sizeable amounts of schoolbooks in Tumbuka. Despite changing emphasis during colonial rule, this led to the recognition of Yao and Tumbuka as national languages in addition to English in 1945 (Reh and Heine 1982:100).

The second leading influence was exercised by the British South Africa Company and their head, Cecil Rhodes, after whom Southern and Northern Rhodesia were named. He managed to get the exclusive mining rights from Chief Lewanika in Zambia and thus gradually extended British rule from the Cape to the (emerging) Copperbelt. The mines had to be opened up by railways and thus the white mining experts were followed by settlers, who provided the basic infrastructure and commodities. Whereas the whites (directly from Europe or indirectly via South Africa) produced the necessary agricultural products, Indians (usually also via South Africa) provided the necessary trading services. Both operated mainly along the line of rail; this led to the still dominant discrepancies between urbanised and rural areas, especially in Zambia and Zimbabwe - large areas of Malawi remained what could be termed 'native territory', like Tanganyika across Lake Nyasa/Malawi.

It is important to note that the colonial administration came after the missionaries and the mining companies (it took over Rhodesia from Rhodes' British South Africa Company only in 1822) and was never extremely strong or determined to push through its views when it met with opposition from the other forces. From the very beginning the colonial administration was kept too small to have an impact. Johnston was sent to Nyasaland with £10,000 and could thus only afford seventy-five Indian soldiers and one British officer, for instance. Education was thus largely left to the missions, which had to train not only their own preachers but also a small native administrative elite.

Missions and mines have long determined the fate of the land and its people, and they had important linguistic consequences: the missions provided education, and the mines (and the related food-growing farms) generated migration. They not only established the basis for the spread of English in the highest domains of language use, they also provided the first models of English - and how far those could be from the SE norm has been shown recently (Mesthrie forthcoming). Finally, missionary influence, including their endeavour to bring the Bible to the people in their native tongue, also led to the establishment of important lingua francas in the area. The real impact of English in African education however did not start until long after the Phelps-Stokes Report (Jones n.d./1925) recommended that the (new) colonial government increase Government expenditure on 'Native education' as an investment in "better health, increased productivity and a more contented people" (Jones n.d./1925:265). Unfortunately, the colonial administration did not take these suggestions at all seriously for a long time. An Acting Director for Native Education "reported merely that no African in the territory would be requiring higher education in the future" (Ohannessian 1978:286). It was only much later that expansion of education was undertaken, culminating in the founding in 1953 of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Salisbury (Harare). The inequalities in education between the three parts of the country contributed to the breaking up of the federation (among other problems of 'Southern dominance'). Mwankwatwe (1968:174) emphasises the Zambian view that the College "failed hopelessly to win the confidence of African students from outside of Southern Rhodesia".

But English was not the only language favoured in colonial education, in theory and in practice, as is evident from the Annual Report on Native Education for 1927 (p.12), which suggested various 'principal native languages' for Zambia, for instance, Bemba and Nyanja, but also Lozi and Tonga. With regard to English, the colonial administration favoured a rather pragmatic policy in that English should be taught wherever a competent teacher was available "as soon as the
mechanical difficulties of reading and writing in the vernacular have been mastered and provided that the teaching of essential subjects in the syllabus is not thereby affected" (ibid.). In practice, this meant that until the 1950s, English was rarely taught in the 'village schools' and as a rule English was used as a medium of instruction only from Std. 5 onward, but actual practice varied greatly (Ohanessian 1978:289). Thus during colonial rule Bemba and Nyanja in particular gained importance in the Copperbelt and along the line of rail, although officially the colonial administration favoured a multilingual policy including Lozi, Tonga, Bemba and Nyanja (and in addition Lunda, Luvale and Kaonde in the North West).

Despite the presence of the three white groups described (missionaries, especially in Malawi, miners, especially in Zambia, and settlers, especially in Zimbabwe), the direct influence of native-speaker English on black African English (BAE) is difficult to assess. The number of native speakers of English has varied a lot, but has always been much smaller than in South Africa and in relative terms is not more than 5% of the population, with Zimbabwe having the highest and Malawi the lowest numbers. In many ways Central Africa occupied an intermediate role between South and East Africa; the mining areas can be compared to the Witwatersrand and the 'native reserves' of Nyasaland to Tanganyika. Skilled labour was most important for Zambia’s Copperbelt. The number of whites there increased dramatically from 74 in 1924 to 1,398 in 1931 (Epstein 1981:12). But this is paralleled by at least an equally great influx of blacks in relative terms.

3. Language Policies After Independence

Interestingly, the Central African states have always been taken as clear cases of ‘exoglossic’ anglophone states. Reh and Heine (1982) describe Malawi and Zambia as two out of three case studies under this heading (Zimbabwe had only just become independent and could only be considered even more dominantly English in its specific historical context). Malawi is portrayed as a country with a strange paradox (Reh and Heine 1982:88-106): although linguistic variation is much more limited than in other countries (50% speak Nyanja/Cheza as their first language and another 26% speak it as their second, according to the 1966 census), an official policy of bilingualism in English and Cheza was pursued. This was not without problems. The number of English speakers (negligible as a first language and below 6% as a second language) seems much lower than one might deduce from impressionistic observation and the resistance to Cheza is surprisingly deep-rooted, especially in the North, where Tumbuka and English are particularly strong (cf. above). When Cheza was declared the national language (alongside the official language English) in 1968 and Yao and Tumbuka were largely replaced as media in broadcasting and newspapers, a building of the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation in Karonga was burnt down in protest. As language policy is always part of the general political development, it is best interpreted in the context of the wider new national culture. The elevation of Nyanja by the new name of Chewa, for instance, (and not the Mang’anja variety supported by the Blantyre mission in the South), is attributable to the fact that it is based on the variety spoken in Banda’s home area, the Central Province. Thus Chewa was also seen as part of Banda’s new national culture campaign against his political opponents in the early years of independence. It is not surprising therefore that the pendulum swung back after Banda’s fall in 1994.

But such active language policy is an exception in Central Africa. In many ways Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi are typical ‘anglophone’ countries in the sense that no coherent overall language policy was propagated (paying lip-service to African languages often went parallel with maintaining old requirements concerning English); this strengthened the ‘bilingual’ status quo. For many years after independence it was very difficult to find any comprehensive statement on the governments’ educational language policies, for instance.

The major exception seems to be the chapter "The problem of language" in Mwanakatwe’s book on The Growth of Education in Zambia since Independence (1968), where the former Minister of Education summarises all arguments, from one extreme (i.e. parents’ desire "to turn their children into little Englishmen") to the other: "encouraging school children to learn their tribal customs" (Mwanakatwe 1968:216). "Unity in diversity" was the motto Mwanakatwe (1968:213) gave to his equal neglect of indigenous languages and his emphasis on English. He clearly placed functional aspects (efficiency and modernity, mobility, access to international knowledge, modern methods of instruction and quality of teachers and materials) above cultural authenticity.

If both functional efficiency and cultural authenticity have to be achieved in practice, this is only possible through a multilingual policy in all Central African nations. This has meant, for instance, that ‘life president’ Banda used to address the public in English with a simultaneous Chewa translation provided. The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation also uses both, more Chewa than English, and newspapers are mixed, with more English than Chewa. In Zambia, Bemba and Nyanja share the functions of the national lingua franca, and in Zimbabwe, Shona dominance is tempered by Ndebele. Despite potential conflicts, interestingly language policy has never been seen as such a big issue in Zambia. Opinions have oscillated but they have never been extremely pronounced (cf. Kashina 1994).

In Zimbabwe the increase in the number of speakers of indigenous lan-
guages (cf. in Zambia above), the exodus of the white population, who were mostly English native speakers (of about 250 000 in 1979 probably only a third is left today) and their decline in power and importance have not seriously affected the position of English. It is still fundamentally undisputed, despite an interesting academic proposal for a national language policy by Ngara (1982). He set up eight recommendations for language planning and teaching and was careful to point out the "complementary functions of English and the national languages of Zimbabwe" (Ngara 1982:148). Undoubtedly, the precarious balance between the 80% Shona majority and the 15% Ndebele minority plays an important role in the game of language policies there. But even in Zimbabwe not only Shona and Ndebele, but also Lozi and Tonga are used (in the Hwange coal mines in the north-west of the country near the Zambian border).

The influence of economic and political changes on the development of languages and language research can clearly be seen. On the one hand, the economic decline of Zambia in the 1990s has gravely affected the University and as most academics have left for 'greener pastures', especially 'further South', most scholarly work on English and other languages has been discontinued. On the other hand, the political 'awakening' in Malawi after over thirty years of Band's rule as 'life president' also led to a linguistic awakening in that on 22nd September 1994 the Cabinet "directed that the Chichewa Board be dissolved and replaced by a 'Centre for Language' to be established in the University of Malawi" (letter of Dec. 2nd 1994 from the Secretary of Education to the Registrar). In the general climate of internationalisation many scholars are becoming interested in the suddenly 'open questions' of language policy and description. And even beyond the purely academic exercise, many university lecturers, not only graduates, are becoming involved in the new opportunities of publishing and broadcasting. The boom of new newspapers in particular is an interesting field, particularly for language specialists. This is important in practical employment terms but also because it opens up new research opportunities (see below). Interestingly, the hottest political debates are raging in Malawi where in thirty years of 'MCP government' Chewa was developed most clearly into the alternative to English (at least in the small national context), but now in the new and enterprising spirit of 'multi-party politics' or even 'multi-party democracy', plurality is the name of the game.

Finally, the central reason why the independent African governments did not try to abolish the colonial heritage of English can also be viewed in the wider regional context (cf. Lawrence 1992). First we always have to bear in mind that the large shadow of apartheid education had been looming over the frontline states for a very long time and no other rationale was able to compete with the equation of African languages with inequality and underdevelopment and English with freedom and internationalisation. Thus a reorientation could only be attempted with the abolition of apartheid and its linguistic consequences. The interrelationship between South and Central Africa in this respect is as obvious as in many others. Secondly, the lessons that may be learnt by South Africa from its northern neighbours in terms of language policy are not simple. On the contrary a more detailed examination reveals that the complexity of developments in the national context should not be underestimated.

4. The Status and Sociolinguistic Position of English Today

In a general description today, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi would be considered typical ESL countries. English is firmly rooted, at least in the urban areas - and Zambia and Zimbabwe show a staggering rate of urbanisation even by African standards. This does not mean that there are no alternatives. In fact these alternatives are clearer than in the complex multilingualism in West and even in South Africa, because only three closely related Bantu languages (Nyanja, Bemba and Shona) could be used as national lingua francas in the three nations. Thus the situation is quite different from East Africa, where Swahili is a clear alternative to English everywhere. A comparison of domains of English in East and Central Africa (Schmied 1991:41) shows that there is a big contrast between Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi and Tanzania, but Uganda and Kenya may only differ by degree. The fact that English is entrenched much more deeply in Zambia than in Kenya or Tanzania is also manifest in a comparative study of language use, attitude and proficiency (Schmied 1990). But the success of Swahili in Tanzania seems to have been achieved at the expense of English (cf. Schmied 1985). For many years now, someone with a good command of English there is assumed to have been 'schooling' in Zambia or Malawi.

The standard explanation for this multiple identification with languages (e.g. Myers-Scotton 1993) is that English is associated with such domains of power as education and employment, while the national languages identify users in solidarity with members of the African culture. The quantitative relationship between English and African languages is not easy to assess, as no official figures are available. Only selected sample studies allow us to make 'qualified guesses'. Thus the multimedia survey in Zambia in the early 1970s revealed that Bemba is known by 55% of the population, Nyanja by 42% and English by 26%, all with a strong urban bias (cf. Kashoki 1978).

When more than one national language was propagated, this ensured a continuing strong position of English. In the Central African nations there are clear examples of this today. In Zambia and Zimbabwe every student entering the
university must have a pass in the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate in English. The national examination councils are still being built up, except in Malawi, where the Malawi Examinations Board was an early instrument of Chewa propagation (since 1968). In addition, in Zimbabwe, fluent English is required and tested for acceptance into the police force. A major factor in favour of English (and other modern varieties such as Town Bemba, for instance) is the growing urbanisation. The discrepancy between rural and urban English speakers emerged very clearly in the Survey of Language Use and Language Teaching in Eastern Africa (SLULTEA), where Zambia was considered part of Eastern Africa: only 19% in rural but over 45% in urban areas can speak the language (Kashoki 1978; for Zimbabwe cf. McGinley 1987 and Bernstein 1994).

5. Forms of English

So-called 'Africanisms', specific features of the English of African users, have been the focus of research at various regional levels. Bokamba (1982) has summarised possible research fields (with illustrative examples) rather than present an analysis. Schmied (1991) has listed lexical Africanisms and their domains in West and East Africa. Several others have distinguished specific forms of national varieties, such as Zambianisms (e.g. Simukoko 1981 and Chisanga 1987), mainly in grammar. The validity of the concept of Africanism, Zambianism, etc. depends largely on the level of linguistic analysis.

5.1. Pronunciation

The pronunciation of English as a second language usually varies according to levels of mother-tongue interference, even among university graduates, who might in fact choose NOT to emulate the British standard. Thus, apart from the general suprasegmental tendencies towards syllable rather than stress timing and avoidance of vowel reduction in unstressed syllables, variation of individual phonemes is usually according to smaller units than the nation. On the other hand, pronunciation features of BAFÉ are most often described. This raises a problem of generalisation. We distinguish three levels of black African features in pronunciation:

5.1.1. Bantu English. There seems to be a common core of all BAFÉ varieties from East to South Africa. As most Africans have a Bantu language as their mother tongue this is occasionally called Bantu English. Most English speakers in Eastern and Southern Africa tend to simplify the complex vowel system and reduce it to five contrasts in the extreme. This leads to the loss in vowel quantity distinctions - the FLEECE - KIT, FOOT - GOOSE and GOAT - LOT contrasts in Wells' (1982) standard lexical sets. Although the basic pattern of simplification remains the same, the borderline cases may be grouped with different homophone clusters.

5.1.2. Regional English. The basic distinction between Eastern and Southern African black English is the [e] - [a] - borderline. Whereas Tanzanians tend to pronounce bag as [bag] South Africans tend to say [beg], in other words the trap vowel tends to merge with the PALM and the DRESS vowels respectively. The interesting area in this case is Central Africa: whereas most Malawians belong to the Eastern African division, most Zimbabweans belong to the Southern African, and Zambia is divided, the Bemba being more Eastern, the Tonga and Lozi more Southern. Although the split also varies with linguistic context and, of course, socio-educational level, Central Africa seems to be an intermediate area in this case. Of course, most other phonetic variation is much more detailed and is in fact based on ethnic groups (through first language interference).

5.1.3. Ethnically-related English. Most consonant features vary considerably between groups, so that they cannot be described in detail here; general tendencies seem to be the avoidance of fricatives (differences around the alveolar ridge are particularly subtle, as in cheat, sheet and seat) and of consonant clusters (by inserting vowels). The most famous phenomenon here is the /l/ - /l/ opposition, which is not maintained and can be perceived differently. Vivid examples of this are the changes in place names in Zimbabwe, from the colonial (British perceived) Umtali and Gwelo to the modern, more authentic Mutare and Gweru. The strategy to interpret /l/ as /l/ and vice versa is stereotypical for specific ethnic groups in almost any East and Central African nation, from the Gikuyu - Meru in the north to the Tumbuka - Chewa in the South. Despite its widespread nature, this feature is extremely stigmatised and leads to reactions such as: 'Yes, we Bemba have this problem that we cannot pronounce r and use l instead'.

Hancock and Angogo (1982:312) even claim that "All East African varieties have a more discernable substratum of South African English phonology". This suggests considerable linguistic influence from (white) South African settlers, who indeed moved northwards as far as Zambia and even Kenya. But they suggest that the same phenomenon "may be better attributed to the common Bantu substratum".

Another possible source of influence for 'deviant' pronunciations from the still maintained RP model is dialectal mother-tongue influence. Thus Wells (1982:634) attributes certain features of Malawian English, e.g. the characteristic [r], to the dominance of Scottish missionary activities there (cf. above), although the substratum could also contribute. But many such influences are below the
phonemic level and do not lead to phoneme clashes, although they contribute, together with the general tendency towards a syllable-timed rhythm, towards problems of intelligibility.

5.2. Vocabulary

The lexicon seems to be particularly prone to regionalisation in certain fields, even when the actual names used are different. Nation-specific vocabulary is prominent in the political field (probably less so in Central Africa, however, than in East Africa, where Swahili is the political language rather than English). Depending on the political climate, parliament and parties or informers and the ‘special branch’ trend to have variable local names. Of course, in Malawi references to Kamuzu and the ‘life-president’ were prolific, especially in collocations. As African expressions in the political field are used to strengthen national authenticity, they tend to be nation-specific and they vary with the political tide. But they do not have to be derived from African languages. Subtle differences in meaning can be seen from collocations and associations. In the Malawi of the mid 1990s, for instance, the political concept of democracy is almost always preceded by the modifier ‘multi-party’, although those unfamiliar with the national political context may assume that this is not a modification but a tautology. And among the market traders of Lilongwe, freedom meant ‘freedom from market taxes’. Other fields likely to attract regional African expressions are foods (the maize dish sodza in Zimbabwe is basically the same as nsima in Zambia or mealie meal in South Africa), local garments (zambia for a women’s cloth in Zimbabwe, but in Zambia it is called chitenge) and traditional cultural rites (e.g. icilila in Zambia), and songs and dances (as practised by the nyau societies of the Chewa).

Some of the many new words in the informal sector have a complex history: michanga boy is in Zambian English was originally restricted to young men selling cigarettes not by the package but individually; now they refer to almost anyone employed in the informal sector. Such expressions, of course, may disappear again relatively quickly. Thus it remains to be seen how long the term ‘Office of the President workers’ (workers in the informal sector) in Zambia will survive - will it be used only as long as people still remember the politician’s speech in which it was first used in 1994? This category also includes the frequently changing words for black market, for instance, or for used clothes (e.g. salaula in Zambia).

Another interesting categorisation of lexical innovations is according to source language or regional origin. Some South Africanisms are used in Zimbabwe, in Zambia and in Malawi. The most famous example may be tiso-tiso (of unknown origin but used first for thugs or criminals in youth gangs in South Africa). Another possibility is matchboxes (uniform housing units), although the image seems to be almost universal. In other areas too, South Africanisms can be heard north of the Limpopo: examples include mealies (maize) and dagga (cannabis). Many of these, however, do not seem to be firmly rooted in the local variety of English and are more associated with migrant workers who simply continue using these expressions as they do in South Africa (cf. Branford 1994). The matter is further complicated by the problem of reference, as some expressions only seem to be used with a South African reference even when used outside South Africa. Particularly typical Afrikaans expressions, such as braai (barbecue), lekker (nice) and boas (boss) have such a ring, whereas veld (plateau) is also used for the corresponding natural environment in Malawi and Zimbabwe. Zulu expressions, such as impala (an antelope type) are rare outside their language area. The most interesting cases are special English forms that have lost a particular meaning in the motherland, such as robots (traffic lights). Similarly, minerals (not sodas, as in East Africa) covering all the famous brand names of soft drinks from Cola to Bitter Lemon, are sometimes drunk in Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Finally, it should be pointed out that new phenomena do not always have to be expressed through new words; the expansion of existing vocabulary is equally important (and potentially puzzling to the foreigner): the term brothers in Africa can refer to a wide range of related males, ‘related’ both biologically or mentally, and taxi (with an occasional explanatory preceding adjective collective) can be used for different types of paid transport, not only cars hired by individuals.

5.3. Grammar

On the grammatical level, most features of simplification can be observed among Africans from many different regions; variation seems to be largely on socio-economic lines (cf. Simukoko (1981:230) on such features as prepositions, tense/aspect and relativisation/complementation). Without any detailed corpus-linguistic text analyses it seems impossible to predict and specify the consistency and distribution of regional or sub-regional features in the three countries investigated. In this context it is impossible to present long feature lists (such as the examples in Buthelezi (1995), Watermeyer (this volume) and Gough (this volume)) and it may suffice to present a few examples from one genre (newspaper reportage) and one country (Malawi).

5.3.1. Noun phrases are not always marked for number and case. In many cases inflectional endings seem redundant, especially with preceding plural-marked determiners, in compounds and with pluralia tatu.
5.3.2. Prepositions are used differently. In many cases similar (with for by in 3), ‘logical’ (for as a causal preposition in 4), or analogous prepositions are used (voice out in analogy to speak out, for instance, in 5); in some cases this gives the language a new expressive flavour:

3. The seminar was attended with over 250 participants with parliamentarians
   dominating.

4. The Independent learnt last Wednesday that President Muluzi will meet the squad
   to congratulate players and officials for retaining the COSANA championship
   after trouncing some formidable teams in this region of Africa.

5. The programme could therefore, if properly handled, highlight the real needs
   and
   wants of the children who have no forum to voice out their concerns through.

5.3.3. Inflectional endings of verbs are ‘confused’ in complex cases.

6. Otherwise why is the president and his ministers waste their time preaching what
   they do not practise?

7. Because of political influence and manipulation of the press, there has also been
   conflicts of interest between politicians and journalists with journalists ending up
   relegating themselves to unethical reporting.

5.3.4. Complex tenses tend to be avoided.

8. The delegation is reported to have been shocked when they were told that the
   President had already a similar function the previous day by one Hamid and
did not see the importance of seeing another group.

5.3.5. The use of continuous forms is expanded to stative verbs. Sometimes the
   meaning ‘progressive’ seems to be lost at the expense of ‘temporary’; sometimes
   the form may simply be seen as more expressive:

9. This is stemming from lack of news judgement and of course with some political
   influence from the political circus.

10. The source also charged that the official’s behaviour is that of a double faced
    man. “He (the official) goes about condemning corrupt practices when his own
    back yard is stinking”.

5.3.6. Verb complementation varies freely. The complex St E verb patterns of
   infinitives with or without to and gerunds with or without prepositions are often
   not supported by function(al differences) and thus weakened.

11. In another development, Nelson Mandela is reported to have pleaded with
    influential [sic] editors to report positively on the labour situation in South Africa
    in order to allow the government stabilise its economy undisturbed by the
    possible labour unrest.

12. Hardly two weeks from now, Kadonaphani will be testifying of how
corruption free the Nyasaland Government under the wise and dynamic leadership of
   Che Malelozi Ulusi is.

Finally it must be pointed out that in many cases it seems difficult to select
the precise equivalent St E structure as several alternatives are possible. In cases
of semantically complex negation (the second deviation in 13) not unless and
before exclude each other; two constructions are interwoven although the meaning
is unambiguous. In other cases it is difficult to assess precisely whether formal
variation is accompanied by a different meaning. Often the context makes the
meaning clear anyway - and what looks like tautology to some may be emphasis
for others.

13. Benthu recalls lucid of [recalls lucidly?] Tanganika’s karma when Paris Club
    giants told her that unless she collected her TS3b before she could dream of
    getting any aid.

14. He said there was need to safeguard the possible abuse of power and ensure [the
    flexibility to grow.

15. Few months ago the Finance minister left the country and made a lone trip and
    pledge for continued financial support.

16. These are but just some of the negative effects of corruption.

5.4. Idiomaticity

Complex problems of semantics in context lead to equally complex problems
of idiomaticity and it is here where A fE often develops a particular flavour of
expressiveness:

17. However, it would be purely extravagant to pass the blame on the journalists
    alone.

18. He said he would not do that as doing so would render his government prone for
    overthrowing.

19. This therefore is an outcry that Malawi should not be denied the opportunity for
    training.

20. Despite these revelations of disgusting poverty some politicians are out to skin
    the country out of its resources local or otherwise.

Unfortunately isolated examples can hardly convey the feeling for the creative
enrichment of the language by Africanisms in discourse, as our two final
(extreme) examples demonstrate:
21. The skills acquired therefore, after this course, will be in themselves a guarantee to continued free press as there will be no doubt reduced writings resulting from careful skilled approach.

22. It exposed poor editing resulting into poor quality work and lack of finish in stories mostly due to unverified stories. Ethical code of journalism is not observed which has resulted into writing and most often eroding off [sic] the readers [sic] confidence in the press.

6. Research Perspectives

As in many African countries, linguists in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi tend to look back to the post-independence days as the days when resources were still plentiful. In Zambia in particular, the above-mentioned SLULTEA, supported generously by the Ford Foundation and summarised in Ohannessian and Kashiki (1978), provided a basis for future research. Unfortunately, the economic situation in Zambia has deteriorated over the past decade to such an extent that there are few linguists left to carry on: the younger ones are on scholarships in Britain or North America, the older ones work in other Southern African universities or have joined international agencies. Although Ph.D. theses from the area contain a lot of valuable description (e.g. Africa 1980, Simukoko 1981, Chishimba 1984, Siachitema 1986, Chisanga 1987 and Lawrence 1989), a comprehensive picture is only just beginning to emerge (cf. Moody 1985).

Much less is known about English in Malawi, not only because it is much smaller and more isolated than Zambia used to be (as the front-line capital for many intellectuals from further south) but also because the sociolinguistic and corpus-linguistic description of its English has only just begun. However, Malawi has a manageable size, an elaborate organisation structure and the necessary resources to enable it to catch up with its neighbours.

The basis for the present sociolinguistic description of English in Zimbabwe is offered by Ngara (1982). The study already shows the Zimbabwean tendency towards applied analyses, be in language policy or in teaching applications (but compare also Chisanga 1989 for Zambia). In particular, the Communication Skills Centre (cf. Communication Skills Centre 1993 and Morrison 1994) can be compared with similar institutions (e.g. at Dar es Salaam) and has made some interesting contributions to teaching English for Academic or Specific Purposes (EAP) in an African context. Increasingly the Centre's work has been developmental rather than remedial and it has provided not only practical contributions towards studying specific subjects but also more theoretical work towards a description of specific academic discourse (e.g. the language of geology in Love 1993). Team teaching has also led to a more integrated skills development. Recent meetings in the

Southern African Development Corporation region (e.g. Ngara and Morrison 1990) have shown the growing importance of this approach. The reverse side of the coin is, however that the basic reference variety, the educated general common core of English in Zimbabwe, has not been described in detail. But this may not be a major drawback as the appropriate technology that can be used to compile a representative database for such an analysis is only now becoming available.

The advent of electronic mail at Central African universities and of computers in the linguistic departments comes together with the growing importance of text processing facilities in the media. Now that some text types (e.g. from newspapers) are becoming more easily available for qualitative and quantitative analyses, the codification of African usage can be attempted using more stringent scientific methods, enabling some of the basic questions that were raised but not answered in this state-of-the art report to be tackled in the near future. The global framework in the form of the International Corpus of English (cf. Greenbaum, forthcoming) will help answer questions of the 'Africanness' or 'Zambianness' etc. of forms and their consistency. With some international cooperation, national databases could be set up in the national universities and they could be used for theoretical and practical purposes (examining such questions as language change under certain conditions, as well as the acceptability of non-British St E forms). Thus the prospects for more detailed comparative descriptions of the variation in English in the region are promising.

7. Conclusion

Finally, we can return to our opening questions concerning the model character of Central Africa for South Africa and the intermediate position of Central African English between East and South African English.

First, the experience from Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi can provide interesting examples for language policy, proving how slow changes tend to be and how difficult it is to promote African languages. The shift from a relatively simple anti-apartheid view of languages (cf. Dunjwa-Blajberg 1980) towards multilingualism is beginning to emerge in South Africa (with its declared eleven official languages) even more than in Namibia; the balancing of the needs of efficient communication with the rights of minority or indigenous languages requires enormous skill, and the mistakes made by others (e.g. the straight-forward English approach in newly independent Zambia?) can offer valuable lessons. This also applies to the new issue of 'standards' (cf. Jeffery 1993) for English users in South Africa, where, from a black English perspective, the issue is whether several standards according to race (besides white SAE, SAfndE and BSAfE)
will develop, as is already the case on television, where presenters are chosen to suit the expected linguistic preferences of the audience (cf. Gough, this volume).

Second, the growing emphasis on EAP and communication skills can already be felt in many South African universities, particularly in the expanding predominantly black universities (such as Vista) rather than in 'traditional' ones. But in the former, where English is more clearly only an academic language, it may be possible to take over structures and materials from Zimbabwe or even from Kenya more directly, whereas the latter may still have to find a suitable compromise. The need for such considerations is manifest already in many contributions to the 1992 English Academy Conference publication with the provocative title How Do We Ensure Access to English in a Post-Apartheid South Africa (Young 1993). Growing regional cooperation between language planners and language teachers on all levels seems desirable.

The historical dependence of Zambia and Zimbabwe on South African entrepreneurship, which was in colonial times even expressed in the countries' names (Northern and Southern Rhodesia respectively), can still be felt in the form of the long language-political shadow of South Africa: the emphasis on English in Zambia and Zimbabwe, in contrast to its macro-sociolinguistic potential, can be explained as a backlash effect of apartheid (language) policy in South Africa. The new possibilities of and need for regional cooperation on the basis of the South African Development Corporation (SADC), the traditional ANC commitment to English, the (sometimes unrealistic) emphasis on English in Namibia and to some extent even the importance of English as an international language in the neighbouring so-called lusophone countries (Mozambique and Angola) will strengthen the role of English in the whole Southern African region in the future. The economic life-lines will again focus on South Africa; despite the railway from Tanzania to Zambia (TAZARA), the links of the Central African states to the south are much stronger than to the east. Furthermore, there is a clear alternative to English in East Africa: Swahili; but there is none in Central Africa. This makes Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi even more prone to linguistic influences from South Africa than in the last decades. Thus it can be expected that the influence of SAfE will rather increase compared to the frontline situation and the situation will revert back to the days when South Africa was the economic powerhouse for the exploitation and development of its northern neighbours. The similarities may even be increased by developments in SAfE. With the growing emphasis on the description of BASfE, a collective awareness of black African English as used by South Africa's northern neighbours and a comparative analysis of Southern African varieties of English may bring the entire region closer together in terms of language and in terms of linguistic research.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank my colleagues in Africa and Germany, especially Teresa Chisanga (Zambia, now Swaziland), Moira Chimombo (Malawi), Alison Love (Zimbabwe) and Diana Hudson Etiee (Bayreuth) for their cooperation during the fieldwork (in 1990 and 1994), the analysis and the interpretation of the data this article is based on. As it is obviously impossible to do justice to the topic in such limited space, I have to take the blame for gross oversimplification and only scratching the surface of a number of issues; I did feel however that it was necessary to show how varied and interesting the subject is, bringing many undercurrent debates to the surface and pull some strings together - even if, perforce, too tightly.

2. Both terms Central as well as Southern African English have not really been defined in linguistic terms. Magura (1985) uses 'Southern African Black English' referring clearly to the Republic of South Africa as well as Zimbabwe without questioning the expansion of this "new variety of English" (Magura 1985:251). The corresponding section in Cheshire (1991) is also called 'Southern Africa'; it is introduced by Chishima (1991) and covers both South and Central Africa. I will use 'Central Africa' as a convenient cover term for Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi, emphasizing the region's independence, and 'Southern Africa' to include Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and (the Republic of) South Africa, emphasizing their interrelatedness.

3. I am using the English names for African languages, although I am aware of the fact that in their 'proper' African forms they have prefixes such as Kiswahili, Silozi, Cinyanja, etc.

4. The field of higher education was very small in colonial days and the entire southern African area was seen as a unit. This meant that students from as far north as the copperbelt went to Fort Hare, formerly the South African College of Native Education (Ohamnissian 1978:290). This is where the beginnings of educated black South African English (BSAfE) lie.

5. As the balance of languages can be a sensitive national issue, unfortunately, language questions are omitted in many national censuses, thus no hard evidence is available. The percentages given are based in most cases on education statistics, as English is usually acquired through the formal education system, or on 'good guesses' by the 'informed experts'.

6. Although the fact that most Bantu languages have only a five (or seven) vowel system is usually given as the explanation for such simplifications, it has to be admitted that the BSAfE systems do not always match the 'underlying' first-language systems and that similar features can be found in other ESL varieties that are 'based' on entirely different systems (e.g. vowel length in Afrikaans English in Watermeyer, this volume). Thus other factors must also play an important role (cf. Schmied 1991:56).

7. The contrast in pronunciation between East and Central African English can also be seen
in the different orthography of loanwords from English in languages of the northern and
the southern parts, such as Swahili and Shona, but even within northern and southern
Swahili itself. *banti* is used in Kenya but *banti* in Tanzania. Internal variation can
however also be seen in *shantishe* in Shona (cf. Schmied 1991:138-167).

8. These texts are in fact from one newspaper (*The Independent*, of December 1994), which
is basically written by four journalists. They are all contained in the Corpus of East
African English, which aims at a representative collection of texts from Kenya, Tanzania
and Malawi (cf. Schmied, forthcoming). Examples from newspapers also help to avoid
the problem in using too many mesolectal or language-learner examples, as these should
not occur on this level (except in syntax?). A discussion of the categorisation of these
features can be found in section 3.4. of Schmied 1991).

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