

## **Simplifying the Rules in the Grammar of Kenyan English**

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### **Abstract**

This paper looks at the grammatical (i.e. syntactic and morphological) features of 'Kenyan English'. With reference, as the target, to the grammar of what one could call standard 'international' English, the features in question are non-target-like in some way and in this paper they are referred to also as 'Kenyan English forms'. They are discussed from the point of view of second language acquisition and use, which provides a suitable framework for accounting for the variability which, as observed in this study, characterizes their use. The paper concludes that the development of such forms was inevitable: it is only natural that when a language is so widely used (as English is in Kenya) as a second language, a number of such forms will come about as a result of imperfect learning of the target language, and 'stick'.

### **1. Introduction**

First, a short dialogue:

- Student: I want to see Dr L.
- Secretary: You are who?
- Student: I am M, initial N.
- Secretary: Dr L. is not in yet. You can wait for him.
- Student: I can't. I have to go. We have to learn in five minutes.
- Secretary: Then, what you do, come back at eleven.

This fictitious dialogue would probably not be that fictitious in a departmental office at the University of Nairobi when a student goes there to ask after Dr Lecturer.

The dialogue features some of the particular meanings that Kenyan English seems to have added to those you will find in a general English dictionary.<sup>1</sup> Thus *to learn* has the additional meaning of 'to have a class; to study.' It also uses two syntactic constructions that are very common in Kenyan English, namely: *You are who?* (to mean 'What's your name?') and *What you do*, said with rising intonation to mean '(Why don't you) do this'.

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<sup>1</sup>I am aware that although most people would probably take it for granted that there is a variety of English called Kenyan English, there are still some who would disagree. The aim of this paper is not to engage in the debate, though. I simply agree with those whose view is that any country, like Kenya, where English is so widely used in everyday life, is (at least) developing (and even 'standardising') its own variety of English. (See e.g. T. McArthur's (1987) 'Circle of World English' reproduced in Crystal (1995: 111).)

Many other words not used in the short dialogue above have additional meanings that characterize – though they may not be limited to – Kenyan English. Examples are: *higher learning* is synonymous with 'higher education'; *slang* synonymous with 'a mixture of languages, especially English and some other language, in an informal way'; *to avail* synonymous with 'to make available'; *to revenge* with 'to take revenge'; *severally* for 'several times'; *whereby* with 'where'; *double-decker* with 'bunk beds'; *academician* with 'academic'; *semester* with 'any academic term of study'. (This last term seems to be a neologism apparently so far limited to the University of Nairobi, where we talk of an academic year having 'three semesters'!) Kenyan English also contains several words that do not appear in the dictionary, among which *\*oftenly* for 'often' and *\*anyhowly* for 'anyhow'.

It is not, however, added meanings and words that this paper is about; it is rather about the grammatical (i.e. morphological and syntactic) aspects of Kenyan English. These have rarely been the subject of investigation by the many studies – essentially in the form of university research papers – on the use of English in Kenya. (These latter have largely been limited to phonological aspects.<sup>2</sup> This paper will thus examine constructions like *\*What you do, call him*, *\*Majority of people*, *\*Are you understanding me?*, *\*The fees is Ksh 500*, *\*Type for me this letter*, etc.

With reference to what some have called 'standard international English', which, as far as this paper is concerned, can be represented by standard British and American English, such forms are ill-formed – and that's why they will be marked with an asterisk. From a second language acquisition point of view, one would use the term 'non-target-like' to refer to them. In this paper they will not, however, be looked at primarily in a kind of 'error analysis' approach whereby an attempt would be made to try to identify the causes of such non-target-like forms, such as saying that such-and-such structure is the result of interference from Swahili. Unless it was based on a much more in-depth study, such an approach would be more speculative than illuminating, since, as it has been convincingly argued in the literature on second language (L2) development, it is less than easy to assign a given 'error' to one cause: one 'error' could be due to many factors at the same time. (See e.g. Ellis, 1985, pp. 35-36, 53) for a discussion of this point.) There will be little reference to possible causes of the Kenyan English forms that will be pointed out. Otherwise, I leave such an error-analysis-like enterprise to a possible, more in-depth study on the same topic. The aim of this paper is simply to describe the linguistic nature of those non-target-like forms and, where possible, their context of use. But the word 'simply' should not make one believe that describing errors is a lot easier since, as Ellis (1994) observes, 'even if the error itself can easily be identified, it is often problematic to determine what the error consists of' (p. 57). The whole analysis will rest on the premise that English is learnt in Kenya as a second language. Therefore, an attempt will be made to view given Kenyan English forms as resulting from specific processes of L2 acquisition and strategies of L2 use.

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<sup>2</sup> In this connection, perhaps the best known paper is an MA thesis (written for the University of Nairobi) by Maurice Ragutu (1993) and entitled 'Phonological Features of Non-Stigmatised Accent of Kenya English.' The reader is warned, though, that this paper does not report any data on which its discussion and conclusions are based.

As far as possible the paper will illustrate with authentic material, that is that which has actually been produced by someone. Written illustrative extracts will be taken from formal pieces of writing where the authors were expected to care with the language. That is why most of them will be taken from three leading newspaper dailies in Kenya, namely *Daily Nation* (hereafter *Nation*), *East African Standard* (hereafter *Standard*), and *Kenya Times* (hereafter *K. Times*). The remaining extracts will come from published books, formal letters or advertisements from institutions or companies, and linguistics students' papers from the higher classes at the University of Nairobi. However, since some of the constructions under analysis occur almost only in oral speech, some illustrative examples will simply have to be invented – although they will be based on what I have heard.

## **2. What “simplifying the rules” means in this paper**

It has been suggested (see e.g. Ellis 1985: 83) that ‘errors’ – or, better, ‘non-target-like forms’ – that L2 learners produce could be considered as various manifestations of one generic strategy of L2 acquisition, that of simplifying (i.e. of lessening) the learning task. In the same vein, in the present case all the non-target-like production in Kenyan English could be argued to be different manifestations of a general process of trying to make the rules as easy as possible, though this time in L2 use rather than learning. The paper will actually try to show that the pattern seems to be to make all the rules optional, along a principle like the following: You are free to apply, or not, the rule in question. This will, as a consequence, lead to such phenomena as apparently reducing the number of rules, ignoring exceptions and even the reverse phenomenon of generalizing the exceptions.

Reducing rules can be illustrated by a case where the learner-user does not bother to let a plural verb form go with a plural subject and a singular verb form go with a singular subject, but, instead, uses a singular verb form for even a plural subject or a plural verb form for even a singular subject. Ignoring exceptions can be illustrated by marking, with an *-s*, the plural of even uncountable nouns like *furniture*. Generalizing exceptions can be illustrated by a case where any noun premodifier gets pluralized, as in *\*a shoes shop* (instead of ‘a shoe shop’), while pluralizing noun premodifiers is allowed only for a handful of exceptions.

Support for the idea of ‘optional rule’ could be evidenced by the data gathered for this paper which suggest that the same learner-user will, in the same sentence for instance, sometimes use the two otherwise mutually exclusive rules. That is why it is important to stress that the reduction (or ignorance, or generalisation) of rules mentioned in the previous paragraph is only an ‘apparent’ one. This is because one would not have strong ground to assert that what we are calling simplification of rules here will lead to an unambiguous reduction, etc., of any given rule: there can never be enough data from the speech production of a given L2 learner-user to prove that he or she will never resort again to the rule that he or she is assumed to have ‘dropped’.

This optional-rule view could perhaps be best accounted for if cast within the framework of the variability in language use in general, and the even greater variability in the language of L2 learners

in particular. As Ellis (1994) notes, ‘Learner language, like the language of native speakers, appears to be inherently variable... However, language learners seem to be particularly prone to variability’ (p. 22). Variability means that the language user has a choice between two rules. If this choice is dictated by the context –situational, linguistic, or psycholinguistic– this is a case of what has been called 'contextual variability' (see e.g. Ellis, 1985) or ‘systematic variation’ (see e.g. Ellis, 1994)). If it is random, then this is a case of 'free variability' or ‘free variation’. The type of evidence from the data which this paper will illustrate with seems to suggest that the variation at issue is more of the free type than the contextual.<sup>3</sup> Ellis (1994) suggests that

Free variation can be considered to occur when two or more forms occur randomly in (1) the same situational context, (2) the same linguistic context, (3) the same discourse context, (4) perform the same function, and (5) are performed in tasks with the same processing constraints. (p. 136)

To go back to our illustrative data, these come from pieces of formal writing, like newspaper articles, where there must have been little (or no) variation, at least as far as the situational and psycholinguistic contexts are concerned. As for the linguistic one, I would contend that there are cases (and many of them in our data) where not even it would account for the variation. This point could be illustrated by a learner-user who, in the following extract ‘... *determiners are head functional projections and select<sub>s</sub> NP complements*’, used both a plural verb form (*are*) and a singular one (*selects*) to go with one and same plural subject (*determiners*).

The fact that the variability this paper will deal with seems to be mostly of the 'free' type is consistent with my characterisation of the whole process as a case of rule *simplification*, because if otherwise the learner-user had to select a given rule because of a given context, then this would actually produce two rules instead of one, which would arguably be not an instance of simplification, but rather of complication.

### **3. Examples of cases of rule simplification in Kenyan English**

#### ***3.1 Getting rid of the apostrophe in spelling***

This looks like the most frequent feature of written Kenyan English. That said, many would argue - and I would readily agree with them - that it is not a characteristic of any specific English as such, but rather of all Englishes, in view of its widespread occurrence not only in the casual style, but even in the supposedly careful style of formal written English. Who can indeed remember how many

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<sup>3</sup> Some might want to question such a suggestion on the basis of the observation from Ellis (1994) that ‘A general finding of [longitudinal studies on free variation] is that free variation occurs during an early stage development and disappears as learners develop better organized systems...’ (p. 137). They would want to question my suggestion since I have indicated that my illustrative data will be taken from learners-users of English at an advanced stage of L2 development.

times he/she has seen spellings like *\*a masters degree*, *\*a bankers cheque*, *\*a travellers cheque*, or *\*a beginners course*, even in the most formal of documents? Despite its being rather a world-wide feature, I could not afford to ignore its presence in Kenyan English, because it is definitely one of its conspicuous characteristics. That is, one of those you will almost certainly come across on any single page of written text.

A distinction will have to be made between two cases of the idiosyncratic spelling under consideration: that of contracted auxiliary forms and that of the genitive construction with an apostrophe. The former relates to the contrast between *\*cant*, *\*dont*, and *\*its* on the one hand, and *can't*, *don't*, and *it's* on the other hand; the latter relates to the contrast between *\*the childrens room*, and *\*his fathers car* on the one hand, and *the children's room*, and *his father's car* on the other hand.

In both cases the irregular use without the apostrophe is nonetheless very frequent in formal, written Kenyan English. One would even be tempted to say it is as common as - if not actually more than - the regular form, namely that with the apostrophe. However, it does not seem to be a question of using either this form or that one: there is evidence that users tend to alternate between the two forms interchangeably, as illustrated in the following two sentences, by the same author:

(1) (a) This is despite consistent presence of girls' schools in the top ten positions over the last five years...

(b) Unlike in 1997 when girls schools took six of the first ten positions, four girls institutions appeared in top ten last year.

(Standard, 25 February 1999)

This again would reinforce the idea of the optionality of the rule. There are even cases where one user has three options, such as *the children's room*, *\*the childrens room*, and *\*the childrens' room*, as illustrated in the following three excerpts from the same author:

(2) (a) *The Comrade* is a monthly publication of the Students' Organisation of Nairobi University...

(b) *The Comrade* joins students professional associations' newsletters...

(c) *The Comrade* is calling on all editors of student's newsletters...

(from an announcement in *Nation*, 7 April 1999, p. 26)

There is, however, one particular construction for which only one spelling, namely that without the apostrophe, seems to be known to most people: this is the case of phrases in which the possessor is singular in a generic way, expressions such as *a Master's degree*, *a Bachelor's degree*, *a beginner's course*, *a traveller's cheque*, *a banker's cheque*.<sup>4</sup> (In this case we would not talk of optionality of rules, since only one option would be known after all.)

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<sup>4</sup> By way of anecdote: I suggested to successive classes of my 4<sup>th</sup> year students at the University of Nairobi that the correct spelling was (or at least used to be!) *a Master's degree*, and on both occasions not a single one (out of 59 and 45 students respectively) agreed with this - until we had to take a bet on it!

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Now, although the point of this section is to prove that the tendency in Kenyan English is to reduce the use of the apostrophe, it seems that in the process of trying to do so some learners-users developed a reverse peculiarity of adding an unnecessary apostrophe, probably due to the confusion between the possessive determiner 'its' and the contracted form 'it's': it is not rare to see '\*it's' in lieu of the possessive determiner 'its', as in the examples in (3) below:

- (3) (a) We congratulate Kenya Shell on it's first Centenary in Kenya.  
(from an announcement by Geology Investments Ltd. in a *Nation* issue in November 1999).
- (b) ... Ken Gen extends it's welcome to the Comesa Summit and Trade Fair...  
(from an announcement in *K. Times*, 20 May 1999, p. 20)
- (c) Kenya uses tourism today as it's leading foreign exchange earner...  
(from a flyer by The Kenya Scouts Association advertising the 11th World Scout Moot 2000)

And for this third year student (in a paper sat in September 1999) it is clear which is which: after giving the following two sentences to illustrate a point

- (4) (a) The infant dipped it's hand in water  
(b) The dog dropped it's bone in water

the student goes on to say that 'the possessive pronoun' [sic] is *it's*'. And for some learners-users the apostrophe is even used in verbs to mark the third person singular, as shown in these two sentences by the same author:

- (5) (a) The sentence fragment argument supports the claim...  
(b) This is usually in cases where one wants to place emphasis.  
(from a 4th year student's paper, April 2000)

### 3.2 Reducing agreement rules

We will first of all look at the traditional type of agreement, which we will refer to as person-number agreement. It covers two cases, namely: a) that of subject-verb agreement in person and number - which can be illustrated by the contrast in the verb form in *he talks* vs. *they talk*; and b) that of agreement in number between a noun and its determiner - as in *this book* vs. *these books*. Then we will look also at the case of tag-questions where the presence of one verb form entails that of another.

#### 3.2.1 Simplifying person-number agreement

Concerning the first case of this type of agreement, the data gathered show three possibilities – the only ones possible, in fact:

- a) the regular, standard international English option where the verb in the third person will take the inflection *-(e)s* at the end if the subject is in the singular and no inflection at all if in the plural; and, in the case of determiners, that of a singular determiner going with a singular noun and a plural determiner going with a plural noun;
  - b) the idiosyncratic structure in which the subject is singular and the verb is plural, as in *\*he think*;
  - c) the idiosyncratic structure in which the subject is plural and the verb singular, as in *\*they thinks*.
- The data gathered about non-target-like options (b) and (c) suggest that it is (c) that is relatively widespread. Its frequency of occurrence is indeed such that one might conclude that the rule governing subject-verb agreement in Kenyan English reads something like this: 'You may put the verb in the singular even when the subject is in the plural'.<sup>5</sup> This applies also to the case of a coordinated subject, where the two conjuncts are joined by *and*, as in *the man and the boy are good friends*.<sup>6</sup>

Here are some data (just a handful of the very many I was able to gather) to illustrate the Kenyan English use of *a singular verb/determiner for a plural subject/noun determined*.

- (6) (a) The suspicions and animosity between university authorities and the student community is unnecessary...  
(*Standard*, 1 December 1999, p. 6)
- (b) Small/large quantities of plain or printed cartons ideal for use or when moving offices is available.  
(from an advertisement in *Nation*, 5 May 1999, p. 2)
- (c) These is done by the KPA.  
(*Standard*, 6 January 2000, p. IV)
- (d) Many imitations 'Gear Locks' claims it is MUL-T-LOCK...  
(from an advertisement in *Nation*, 6 January 2000, p. 40)
- (e) The duplication and overlaps in duties becomes more acute...  
(*Nation*, 20 December 1999, p. 22)
- (f) He added that improved technical education and modern technologies was the only way through which Kenya could produce skilled manpower.  
(*Standard*, 14 March 2000, p. 3)

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<sup>5</sup> Of course there are those cases in the language where a subject noun in apparent plural form will have singular meaning and hence singular agreement, as in *Linguistics is a good subject* or *five and five equals ten*; and there are those where a noun in singular form will have plural meaning and hence a plural verb, as in *Our team have won*. For such cases, see e.g. Swan (1996: 526-528).

<sup>6</sup> The rule governing the coordination with *or* is a bit trickier. This is how Swan (1996: 533) puts it:  
When two subjects are joined by *or* the verb is usually singular if the second subject is singular, and plural if it is plural [as in]:  
*The room's too crowded –either two chairs or a table has got to be moved out.*  
*The room's too crowded –either a table or two chairs have got to be moved out.*

(g) The events ... questions not just the capability... to stem crime, but [they] equally queries the ... commitment to ensuring security.

(*Standard*, 3 May 2000, p. 6)

(h) He told school heads to ensure that the national fee guidelines was strictly adhered to while all monies collected was properly accounted for.

(from *K. Times*, 4 January 2001, p. 2)

(i) The Chairman, the Board of Directors, Management and Staff... congratulates...

(from an announcement in *K. Times*, 20 May 1999, p. 16)

(j) The polemics and polarisation that has attended the 8-4-4 system means that the combatants... have energy for little else.

(*Sunday Nation*, 6 December 1998, p. 6)

Now, for those who might be tempted to argue that the Kenyan English forms pointed out above may have just resulted from slips of the pen (or the computer!), that they are mere typographical errors, the following extracts, produced by one individual – and in each case a different individual – clearly suggest that such forms are indeed systematic, and not just random occurrences. Examples (a) to (e) were produced by five different University of Nairobi students.

(7) (a) Slang is a linguistic varieties which occur with the informal style and which is usually characterised by differences in vocaburality [sic]...

(from a third year student's paper, September 1999)

(b) (i) Other aspects of Kenyan English embodies the use of the word 'in case'.

(ii) Phonological aspects of Kenyan English is largely influenced...

(iii) Thus the following words becomes difficult to distinguish.

(iv) Kenyans also has a tendency to place stress on the first syllable...

(v) These inherent features in Kenyan English encompasses use of pronoun...

(vi) ... Here are constructions ... but which is not recognised in British English.

(vii) Another observation is that Kenyan English speakers seldomly [sic], if ever, deletes a pronominal...

(viii) These misspelling [sic] of words is largely due to the fact that...

(from a third year student's paper, August 1998)

(c) (i) Speakers of [Kenyan English pronunciation] has a near masterly [sic] of RP but a few peculiarities occurs...

(ii) ... all the syllables... recurs at regular intervals. In [Kenyan English pronunciation] all syllables appears to command equal prominence.

(from a third year student's paper, August 1998)

(d) (i) ...synthetic approaches pays insufficient attention ...

(ii) ...grammatical syllabuses... ignore communicative competence and concentrates more on grammatical competence.

(iii) This would leave out forms... which expresses a prayer, [etc].

(from an MA1 student's paper, September 1999)

(e) (i) ...language errors have to be first diagnosed... to prevent its occurrence in future.



(ii) ... then he analyses the errors and ends by explaining them, giving an adequate explanation of its occurrence.

(from an MA1 student's paper, September 1999)

Turning now to the case of the *singular subject/determiner* vs. *plural verb/noun determined*, here are some illustrative examples.

(8) (a) ...the shipping community has observed that most pilferage occuru between the berth and the pantry...

(*Standard*, 6 January 2000, p. IV)

(b) Our listu of clients includee various multinational corporations...

(from a flyer from a printing company called Newtech Concepts)

(c) The brides/maid's materialu for their suits were also imported.

(*Nation*, 19 November 1999)

(d) But explicit sex literatureu on the newsstands, in music and films are widely available to the public...

(*Nation*, 7 March 2000, p. 8)

(e) Despite all this "beehive like" activities, imports and exports suffers [sic] pilferage at the port.

(*Standard*, 6 January 2000, p. IV)

(f) But despite all this varied opinions ...

(*Standard*, 3 May 2000, p. 6)

(g) It simply have to be angle or flush parking as the case may be.

(from *Driving Test for Kenya*, p. 19)

(h) Gloom... as destructionu of forests intensify

(This is a headline in *Standard*, 14 August 2000, p. 2 of 'The Big Issue'.)

(i) As a matter of fact, the numberu of horrendous roads in this country are innumerable. Our disregardu for hindsight and foresight in this country now seem to dominate our national life.

(from *Standard*, 11 January 2001, p. 6)

(j) Posta's choiceu of Financial Services are more convenient, easier, faster and most reliable.

(from an advertisement in *Standard*, 11 January 2001, p. 18)

And once again for the sceptics, the following are extracts illustrating an apparent systematic use of the feature under analysis:

(9) (a) Its used in the BBC. Its a prestige accent. It do not have native speakers. It do not have a non-prevocalic /r/. Its the accent of prestige.

(from a third year student's paper, September 1999)

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(b) It is also equally hard to find an American English linguistic features not present in a Canadian English speakers.

(from a third year student's paper, September 1999)

(c) This words...

(from a third year student's paper, September 1999; perhaps I should add that the student used the phrase as it is quoted here six times on just one page!)

(d) (i) This characteristics also fit in the characteristics of a pidgin.

(ii) The phonological... simplification sometimes lead to words...

(iii) Sheng... was used by the youth... and for a limited social activities...

(iv) Most of these interference in pronunciation come from...

(from an MA2 student's paper, March 2000)

Interestingly, some learners-users will use the two structures side by side, as it were. For instance, the student who produced the data in (7) (a) also wrote the following, just in the paragraph preceding the one quoted above:

(10) RP is unusual in that the few speakers who uses it...

Its the standard pronunciation that is usually taught to non-native speakers who learns English.

For more, and robust, evidence of this alternating two forms which seem to reflect apparently opposite phenomena, consider the data in (11) below, all from an MA thesis (by an MA 2 student, 1999).

(11) (i) The inadequacies of the traditional term 'Pronoun'... has been discussed... by such scholars as Quirk & Greenbaum (1973:22) who replaces it with the term 'Proform'...

The basic argument against the case of this term is that the linguistic element it refers to are not always noun-substitutes.

(ii) These corresponds to English 'this', 'that'... respectively. Their plural forms which corresponds to 'these' and 'those' in English are...

(iii) The semantic difference between [the] (a)-constructions and their (b)-counterparts is that the former is ambiguous while the latter is not.

(iv) Each of the above categories have a close relationship with the lexical category X° and is consequently called a projection of the X°.

(v) But according to Abney (1987) determiners are head functional projections and selects NP complements.

(vi) Further, their role within the DP [i.e. Determiner Phrase] is secondary as they only modifies the DP.

The fact that one learner-user may use two forms alternately is, once again, only consistent with the variability inherent especially in second language learning and use.

### 3.2.2 *Invariably using 'isn't it?' in the tag question*

With tag questions apparently being almost the sole 'preserve' of oral speech, I have not yet come across written examples of the structure to be talked about here. However, the fact remains, at least

in oral speech, that the formula *isn't it?* serves all cases (in which the statement to which the tag refers is positive). That is, whatever the verb in the (introducing) statement is, the one in the tag question will, invariably, be *isn't it?*, as in these invented examples: *We are good people, isn't it?* and *You have arrived from far, isn't it?*<sup>7</sup> For a non-invented example, look at the following data:

(12) Lubukusu and English are different languages. *Isn't it?* If yes, how different?

In a conversation...with your fellow Lubukusu speakers who also know English, you supplement ... Lubukusu with English often enough by ... mixing the two languages. *Isn't it?*

(from a questionnaire in an MA2 student's thesis proposal, April 2001)

### 3.3 Reducing the use of the article

To start with, I want to point out instances of the special case of the word *majority*. For some reason I cannot even venture a speculation about, it is quite common to find, in written Kenyan English, the word *majority* used without an article even where, in standard international English, one would definitely be expected. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (1995, 5<sup>th</sup> edition), the word *majority* is uncountable (and hence does not require an article) only in one of its three suggested meanings, that is the one in which it refers to 'the age when one is legally considered a full adult', as in *the age of majority is 21*. (It will also be used without an article in the rather idiomatic phrase *majority rule*.) The brackets [ ] in the examples below denote the absence of an article.

(13) (a) [ ] Majority of secondary schools... have defied the...directive to reduce fees.

(*Standard*, 12 January 2000, p. 2)

(b) He noted that surveys... have shown that [ ] majority of schools ...

(*Standard*, 25 February 1999)

(c) A spot-check by *Kenya Times* indicated that [ ] majority of the touts...

(*K. Times*, 15 July 1999, p. 28)

(d) ... but particularly because of their belonging to the party that has been given the mandate by [ ] majority [sic] Kenyans to rule them.

(*K. Times*, 12 July 2000, p. 6)

(e) ... the education of the girl child was a big success in primary schools but [ ] majority drop-out [sic] during the transition to secondary schools.

(*Standard*, 15 July 2000, p. 12)

And below are varied instances of non-use of the article. Once again one would have expected an article in the place marked with [ ].

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<sup>7</sup> I am informed by Anthea Fraser Gupta (of the School of English at the University of Leeds) that this kind of use of *isn't it?* occurs 'also in Singapore & Malaysia English, Lankan English, British Asian English, London English, and now generally in British English, usually written as *innit* in BrE' (Gupta, personal communication, Dec. 2000).

(14) (a) Minimum Admission Requirements:

1. A degree in any discipline
2.  Advanced “A” Level certificate  
(from an advertisement in *Sunday Nation*, 25 April 1999, p. 24)

(b) Any rent banked or paid after  5th day shall include  percent... penalty per month ...   
Deposit is refundable upon written notice...  
(from a notice from an agency called Masterways Properties Ltd.)

(c) We congratulate H.E. ... for hosting  Comsatex '99 trade fair  
(from an announcement in *K. Times*, 20 May '99, p. 14)

(d)  Ideal candidate will be a recently qualified accountant...  
(from an advertisement in *Nation*, 7 June 1999, p. 34)

(e) The site... invites applications for... courses... which will be offered during  August  
school holiday.  
(from a Kenyatta University ad in *Nation*, 12 July 1999)

(f) (i) [Baden-Powell's] footsteps are preserved at the Rowallan Camp  ideal camp site, located  
11 kilometres from  City of Nairobi.

(ii) THE KENYA SCOUTS ASSOCIATION  
 PROPOSED HOST COUNTRY AND VENUE OF  11<sup>TH</sup> WORLD [SCOUT] MOOT 2000  
(from a flyer produced by the Kenya Scouts Association)

Although it is admittedly not always easy to know where to put an article (the rules governing the use of the article being so many in English), there would be little disagreement as to whether the marked spaces marked with  above would indeed require one: in some of them, as in (c), (e) and (f), reference is obviously being made to either a unique or a well specified event or thing – hence the need for a definite article; in others, as in (a), we are dealing with nouns used in their countable meaning and in the singular – hence the need for an indefinite article.

It can also be noticed that some of the same data above do contain correctly used articles in some places. This would suggest that the people who produced them have knowledge of the rules we are invoking here, except that they probably think the rules in question are simply optional.

### 3.4 Ignoring the exceptions

Under this heading three cases will be pointed out, all of which are instances of ignoring the exception allowed by a general rule and thus of applying the latter to every member of the category concerned. The three are: a) marking usually uncountable nouns for the plural, b) using any verb in the progressive aspect, and c) passivizing a noun phrase from the wrong syntactic position.

'Marking usually uncountable nouns' refers to the case of nouns that are usually uncountable in standard international English, and thus, as an exception to the rule of the plural, do not take the

plural marker. These are words like *evidence*, *equipment*, and *furniture*. Now, notice how the word *equipment* has been given the plural marker *-s* in the following short advertisement on a business card:

- (15) (a) Western Marketing Services, Ltd.  
Dealers in Chubb Security Equipments  
Office Equipments, Printers and Stationers [sic]

Usages such as *\*equipments* and *\*furnitures* are not rare at all in advertisements in Kenya.

'Using any verb in the progressive aspect' is realized by inflecting for the progressive aspect verbs that usually are not. The vast majority of verbs in English can be used in the progressive aspect (marked by the *-ing* verb ending) to refer to an action/event that is going on at the time of speaking. But a handful of them take exception to this<sup>8</sup>: they do not take the *-ing* ending even when the action/event is still going on. In addition, there is the case of habitual events that must be expressed with the simple present form, not the progressive. Thus, constructions like *\*Are you seeing the point?*, *\*I am knowing this*, *\*Are you having money on you?*, and *\*The third person singular present tense in English is being marked by an -s at the end of the verb*, would normally be considered incorrect in standard international English. However, this exceptional use is not infrequent in Kenyan English, notably in its spoken variety.

Below are some examples I managed to glean from written material.

- (16) (a) The above [analysis] represents the meaning of a student who is old and [is] also having a French origin.

(from a fourth year student's paper, April 2000)

- (b) And when the children are not having aphasic disorders [they] will master the principles of their mother tongue within the first 3 or 4 years of life.

(from an MA 1 student's paper, February 2001)

- (c) He said that the Government is also recognising the fact that all sub-sectors ... complement each other...

(*Standard*, 4 July 2000, p. 2)

- (d) More and more are acquiring it and preferring it even to their native Lubukusu.

(from an MA 2 student's research proposal, April 2001)

- (e) Since the verb 'arrive' is being inflected for tense, the embedded clause ... is finite.

(from a BA IV student paper on 6 April 2001)

In these examples, the simple present form, rather than the progressive aspect one, would be the usual one. (It may be worth noting in passing that (spoken) Kenyan English also uses progressive imperative constructions, as in *\*Be typing the next page as I proofread this one.*)

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<sup>8</sup> Nigel Turton lists seventy-six of them. (See entry 627.3.)

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‘Passivizing a noun phrase from the wrong syntactic position’ refers to a construction like that illustrated in (17).

(17) \*The children were bought for food by the father.

Here it is the NP *the children* that has been moved from the wrong position with regard to passivization. Such an argument rests of course on the assumption that the active sentence from which the passive one in (17) has been derived is that in (18).

(18) The father bought food for the children.

It is assumed that the passivization process has moved the NP *the children* from the object position in (18) to that of subject of the passive verb form in (17). It happens, however, that there is a restriction in English on which noun phrases can be moved in the passivization process. The NP *the children* cannot be moved from the position after the preposition *for* because ‘only an NP immediately adjacent to a verb can passivise...’ Radford (1988: 430). The intervening preposition *for* stands in the way of—and thus blocks—passivization. Notice that if the original sentence had been *The father bought the children food*, then one could have said *The children were bought food by the father*, which would be grammatical.

Although examples like that in (18) are hard to come by in written Kenyan English, they are frequent in the spoken one.

### 3.5 Generalising the exceptions

Here specific aspects of rules which are viewed as exceptional are generalized. That is, they are made to apply to instances where they should not. Two cases which seem to be instantiations of this phenomenon, and which prevail in Kenyan English, have to do a) with the overusing of the modal auxiliary ‘shall’ and b) the pluralising of all noun premodifiers.

#### 3.5.1 Overusing the auxiliary ‘shall’

We are informed by a grammar book such as Swan (1996: 216) that *shall* can be used with second and third person subjects in a) threats and promises (note that Swan, *ibid.*, adds that ‘this is very unusual’; equally, note that Leech (1983:26) points out that ‘*shall* is obsolescent in present-day English’), and b) in contracts and other legal texts, where *shall* is used to refer to obligations and duties. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (5<sup>th</sup> edn.) adds c) orders and instructions.

With the above information in mind, let us study the following data. (The italicization of *shall* is mine.)

(19) (a) (i) If a student does not wish to be accommodated at the University's Halls of Residence... he/she *shall* be required to only pay ... tuition fees...

(ii) Students will pay the required fees by Bankers cheque as the University will not accept personal cheques...

(from an announcement in *Nation*, 6 January 1999)

(b) It is hereby expressly declared and agreed that if the rent *shall* be in arrears for more than fourteen days after the same *shall* have become due... or if the tenant *shall* fail to ... observe any of the covenants...

(from a 'Tenancy Agreement' text from Masterways Properties Ltd.)

(c) [It was recommended] that no internal examiner from whom examination marks are still due *shall* have his/her request for leave approved ...

(from a document from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Nairobi)

(d) There *shall* be a [Faculty] meeting ...

(from letters from the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts, UoN, e.g. that of 16 Feb. 2000)

(e) Minimum Admission Requirements

The following *shall* be eligible for admission:

(from an advertisement in *Nation*, 12 May 2000, p. 18)

Now, if we think about each italicized occurrence of 'shall', we would probably conclude that in none of those cases did the authors need to use such a marked form as *shall*. That is, none of the situations concerned sounds really like a threat, or a promise, or a duty/obligation, or an order/instruction. And, in particular, not any one of the three places where *shall* has been used in (b), despite the fact that this is indeed an excerpt from a contract. Note also that there seems to be a paradox in the case of (a): it is, arguably, in (ii) that we would have expected a *shal*', but that is where the author instead used *will* (and emphasized it through underlining, for that matter).

### 3.5.2 *Pluralizing all noun premodifiers*

By 'noun premodification' we mean a construction in which one noun modifies the other, with the modifying noun preceding the one modified, as in *linguistics students* (i.e. 'students of linguistics'). The following is what Murphy (1997) says about such a structure: 'When we use *noun + noun*, the first noun is like an *adjective*. It is normally singular, but the meaning is often plural' (p. 158). Or, more to the point, 'the first noun is normally singular in form **even if it has a plural meaning**' (Swan 1996: 532; emphasis added).

Things are not that simple, though: there seems to be a rather long list of exceptions, that is, 'some nouns [which] have the plural -s even when they modify other nouns' (Swan, *ibid.*) Swan lists at least fifteen such nouns, among which *savings* (as in *a savings account*), *customs* (as in *customs officer*), and *arms* (as in *arms control*). The list does not, however, include words such as *exams*, *cars*, and *fees*, the form of which we are concerned with in the data in (18) below. And what neither Murphy (1997) nor Swan (1996) add is that if the premodifying noun is itself premodified, then it may keep its plural form, apparently to avoid ambiguity, as in *the national examinations council*.

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*Examinations* here will most likely be interpreted as national, as opposed to provincial exams, for instance.

A consequence of pluralizing the premodifying noun without considering the modification relationship carefully could be to change the meaning initially intended. We can illustrate the point with an example from a poster produced by The Kenya Scouts Association to advertise the 'Year 2000 Africa Scout Jamboree' that took place in August 2000. The poster says that the jamboree was to take place at 'Rowallan Scouts Camp'. Since the word *Scouts* here is in the plural, and without an apostrophe after it, from a purely linguistic point of view the meaning of the whole phrase can only be that of the scouts of Rowallan. Yet, since, as happens to be the case, *Rowallan* is simply the name of the person after whom the camp in question was named, it could not be the scouts of this person. The intended meaning being actually that of a camp for scouts, and a camp named after a certain Rowallan, the correct appellation can only be *Rowallan Scout Camp*. Note, incidentally, that the name of the Association is given as *The Kenya Scouts Association*. This is correct, for the intended meaning, as it is an association of the scouts of Kenya, not of Tanzania, for example.

After this rather long introduction to the issue, let us now look at the data below.

(20) (a) Exams performance shows a drop.

(This is a headline in *Standard*, 25 February 1999.)

(b) Agents express fear over cars vandalism.

(This is a headline in *Standard*, 6 January 2000, p. IV.)

(c) Our cash position... is projected as follows:

1. Cash on hand
2. Shareholders capital injection...
3. Repayment of insider loans ...

(from one bank's 'Progress report' in *Nation*, 7 April 1999, p. 26)

(d) Fees charges for two semesters.

(from an announcement in *Standard*, 29 February 2000)

(e) Donors seek talks over books wrangle.

(This is a headline in *Nation*, 6 May, 1999)

(f) ... jobs cuts case allowed.

(This is a headline in *K. Times*, 14 September 2000, p. 1)

The plural form in any of the five cases underlined violates the general rule given above from both Murphy (1997) and Swan (1996). Scovel (1998) points out that pluralizing noun premodifiers is 'a common error by [L2] learners of English following the logical, but non-English pattern of extending the plural to the formation of noun phrases' (p. 36). In the



illustrative cases above standard international English would have had *exam performance*, *car vandalism*, *shareholder capital*, *fee charges*, *book wrangle*, and *job cuts*.

### **3.6 Avoiding inversion in direct Wh-questions**

By 'direct *wh*-question' reference is made to questions like *Who came here?* and *What did he do?*, which stand on their own as independent clauses. ('Indirect *wh*-question' will refer to a question embedded in another clause, as in *She asked what he had done.*) There are two sides to inversion in direct *wh*-question formation: on the one hand there is what is traditionally called 'Auxiliary-Noun Phrase Inversion' following the placement of the *wh*-element at the beginning of the clause, but if the *wh*-element is not a subject. On the other hand there is non-inversion if the *wh*-element is a subject, as in *Who arrived first?*, but also when this element, as a non-subject, comes at the end of the clause, as in *You said you saw whom?* This latter type of question is what is known in the literature as 'echo-question'.<sup>9</sup> In addition, non-inversion is the rule in the case of indirect (i.e. embedded) questions like *Ask him who(m) he saw.*

What seems to be the characteristic feature of Kenyan English as regards *wh*-questions is *non-inversion in direct, non-echo, non-subject questions*. What actually happens in this type of question, which occurs essentially in spoken Kenyan English, is that the *wh*-element is placed at the end, thus obviating the need to resort to inversion. Thus the question you are likely to be asked by a secretary or receptionist wanting to know your name is *You are who?* – instead of *What's your name?* - or, *You are calling from where?* - instead of *Where are you calling from?* And, to be sure, those questions with the *wh*-word at the end will not come as real echo-questions. They will be asked as soon as you have just made a request or rung, without the receptionist, etc. questioning about anything or anybody you have just mentioned.

But of course there are also instances, especially in its written form, where Kenyan English places the *wh*-word at the beginning of the clause. What is of interest to us here is, however, that in some of those instances there will still not be Auxiliary-NP inversion. Although this construction does not seem to be so common even in written Kenyan English, its use cannot certainly go

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<sup>9</sup> One definition of 'echo-question' is provided by Quirk *et al* (1985: 837). This is part of what they say:

Echo utterances are utterances that repeat as a whole or in part what has been said by another speaker... Echo questions are either recapitulatory or explicatory. A [recapitulatory] *wh*-echo question... indicates, by the *wh*-word, which part of the previous utterance the speaker did not hear or understand, [as in]:

A: I saw Ted Dawson today.      B: You saw WHÓ?

...

...The explicatory echo question... asks for the clarification, rather than the repetition, of something just said... [It] is identical to the recapitulatory *wh*-question, except for the substitution of a falling tone for the rising tone on the *wh*-word, [as in]:

A: Take a look at this!      B: Take a look at WHÀT?      ...

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unnoticed in one particular book called *Driving Test Guide for Kenya* (Revised & Reprinted [in] May 1997; published by Swiftfree Publishers) – from which all the examples below were taken.

- (21) Q. 13. Where normally you may find continuous solid yellow lines in the middle of the road? (p. 21)
- Q. 15. Where one should not overtake another vehicle? (p. 22)
- Q. 17. Within what period one should forward the insurance documents at a police station when asked to do so by a police officer? (p. 23)
- Q. 20. Within what period an accident should be reported at a police station? (p. 24)
- Q. 31. What will be the thinking, braking and overall stopping distances when a car is driven at 80 kph? (p. 26)

Note, nonetheless, that the same series of questions contains many that follow the regular inversion rule, as the following examples show.

- Q. 12. When can one cross the continuous solid yellow lines in the middle of the road? (p. 21)
- Q. 34. What does the sign in caption (a) indicate? (p. 27)
- Q. 42. What do you do when you are involved in an accident? (p. 30)

The fact that the authors of the book use both the ‘irregular’ and the regular questions would further support our earlier thesis that the rule at issue is treated as optional.

### 3.7 *Miscellaneous cases*

Under this heading several cases will be dealt with that are certainly identifiable features of Kenyan English but which I could not easily subsume under the general processes used as umbrella terms in the preceding sections.

#### 3.7.1 *Using one preposition for both conjuncts*

‘Conjunct’ here refers to one of the words (or phrases) joined to the other by a conjunction. Thus the phrases *a car* and *a bicycle* are conjuncts in the sentence *He bought a car and a bicycle*.

Consider the use of prepositions in the following sentences:

- (20) (a) [He] told [him] to quit politics [altogether] as [it had been] proved that he received the money on dubious grounds and \_\_\_ unexplained circumstances.

(*K. Times*, 15 July 1999, p. 28)

- (b) We wish to re-affirm our commitment \_\_\_ and support towards the success of COMESA...

(from an announcement in *K. Times*, 20 May 1999, p. 15)

In the space marked with a \_\_\_ there ought to have been used a preposition other than that underlined. This ought to be so because there are nouns which must be introduced by a specific preposition. This is the case of *circumstances* in (a) – which requires *under* or *in*, as opposed to *grounds* – for which

*on* is the appropriate preposition. So, one would have expected that segment to read as ‘... *he received money on dubious grounds and under unexplained circumstances,*’ instead of the preposition *on* being used for both *grounds* and *circumstances*.

On the other hand, a given word will subcategorize (i.e. select) a given preposition to introduce its prepositional complement. This is the case of *commitment* – which will take *to* obligatorily, and that of *support* – which will actually take *for*. Thus one would have expected that segment to read as ‘...*our commitment to and support for...*,’ instead of ‘*towards*’ being used for both *commitment* and *support*.

### 3.7.2 *The use of 'What you do...'*

This is arguably one of the most common and uncontroversial structures of Kenyan English - although essentially limited to the spoken form. It is not meant as a question, but as a kind of what is called 'cleft sentences' (by, e.g. Swan 1996, pp. 114-5) or 'pseudo-cleft sentences' (by e.g. Radford 1997, p. 360), an illustration of which is *What you should do is to see him in person*. In such sentences, the *what* segment –in this case *what you should do*, which serves as the grammatical subject, has to be followed the verb form *is* (or *was* if in the past). Yet what we have in Kenyan English is a statement like:

(23) \*What you do, see him in person.

That is, a kind of cleft sentence with no main verb.

### 3.7.3 *Reversing the order of complements*

The quintessential construction here will be one like:

(24) \*Please type for me this letter

instead of *Please type this letter for me*. The regular rule broken by (24) is expressed by Radford (1988) in the following terms:

... when a Verb subcategorises both a NP and a PP complement, the NP complement must come immediately after the Verb, and hence must precede the PP complement. (pp. 350-1).

So, the NP *this letter* should obligatorily come before the PP *for me*. One might speculate that for even the PP complement to directly follow the verb is in line with the logic of rule simplification that would allow a free order of complements.

The construction in (24) too is a very frequent occurrence of spoken Kenyan English. I still have to find written instances of it. All that I have been able to do so far is gather grammaticality judgements from a section of my 4th year university students. The sentence \**Could you type for me this?* was among a group of others whose grammaticality was to be judged by the students. Out of the thirty-two students who did the exercise, only two (i.e. 6% of them) rightly said the sentence was incorrect. I would want to interpret such statistics as support for the claim that the 'swapping' of the

noun phrase complement with the prepositional phrase complement is characteristic of Kenyan English.

### 3.7.4 *Omitting required complements of verbs*

By this I mean not adding a complement—be it an NP, a PP or even a clause—after a verb, or a particular use of a verb, that requires it. An illustration of this would be saying (as did indeed one of my 1999-2000 BA IV students who had written me a note requesting permission to be absent from the next lecture) ‘\**Please abide*’, in the sense of ‘Please abide by my wishes.’ In this particular case the student should have completed his request with a PP (headed by *by*).

Other examples are given in (25).

- (25) a) \*It's late in the night but we shall reach.  
b) (i) Person A: When shall we meet?  
(ii) Person B: \*We'll arrange.  
c) (i) Person A: Do you have any money on you?  
(ii) Person B: \*No, I don't have.

Although the data in (25) were not gathered from anybody, they are of the type that will be heard in everyday spoken Kenyan English. What is at issue in (a) is that the verb *reach*, in its meaning of 'get as far as, arrive at', requires an NP complement denoting destination, as in *reach home*. In (b) (ii) the verb *arrange* should have taken a complement, e.g. one introduced by *for*, as in *arrange for a suitable date*. In (c) (ii) one would have expected something like *No, I don't have any*. (Or, simply, *No, I don't*.)

### 3.7.5 *The use of 'Us, we...'*

Another very common construction in spoken Kenyan English is that exemplified by (26).

- (26) \*Us, we will start in January.

What is ‘irregular’ about such a structure is the occurrence of the pronoun *us*, which is in the objective case, but which is in a syntactic position that would not justify objective case-marking. Theoretically speaking, objective case can only be assigned to a noun phrase that is placed in (or was moved from) a position of object of a transitive verb or of a preposition. What is of interest in the structure (26) is that the objective case pronoun 'us' does not replace the subjective case *we* (as it would be in \**Us will start in January*); one simply occurs next to the other. (And I have never heard something like \**We us will start in January* either.)

However, one might argue that there is nothing special in the *Us, we...* construction above and want to account for it by saying that the *Us* in (26) is an instance of what Radford (1988: 531) calls dislocated constituents. He illustrates these with the examples in (27) below:

(27) (a) *Me/\*I*, everyone knows *I* can't stand weirdos

(b) Everyone knows *I* can't stand weirdos, *me/\*I*

in which only *Me*, and not *I*, (both of which are the dislocated constituents in either initial or end position) would be allowed. He then goes on to suggest that 'dislocated constituents seem to be assigned Objective case'. That is, an objective case which would not be justified in terms of those rules of case assignment, since in (27) there is no formal way of accounting for the objective case carried by the dislocated *Me*. Now, although the *Me*-example above indeed sounds OK, I wanted to know if, on the analogy of (27), the (a) sentences in (28) and (29) sound correct while the corresponding (b) sentences do not.

(28) (a) ?*Us*, everyone knows we can't stand eccentric people.

(b) ?*We*, everyone knows we can't stand eccentric people.

(29) (a) ?Everyone knows we can't stand eccentric people, *us*.

(b) ?Everyone knows we can't stand eccentric people, *we*.

I sought the 'correctness judgements' of a native speaker, my former lecturer of English grammar. This is part of what he wrote: 'None of those sentences is correct, as far as my wife and I are concerned. No disjunctive pronoun for the plural.'<sup>10</sup> I take 'disjunctive' here to be the equivalent of Radford's term 'dislocated'. Now, for those who share my former teacher's judgement, the \**Us*, *we* ... structure is indeed irregular.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This paper has pointed out and described a number of morphological and syntactic structures which, it has suggested, are characteristic of Kenyan English, but which would be judged not to conform to the target grammar of what has been labelled 'standard international English'. (This is a variety of English which, for the purposes of this paper, I chose to equate with standard British or American English.) The paper has attempted to categorize the structures under consideration into groups reflecting specific cognitive strategies which second language learners-users are likely to resort to in their effort to grapple with the rules of the second language. The paper noted several times that the Kenyan English rule apparently co-exists with the target one. And, because of that, it maintains that learners-users entertain both of them as two options they can use interchangeably - although a given learner-user will probably tend to use one form more often than the other in his/her idiolect.

Three concluding remarks need to be made about the structures identified in this paper: firstly, they must not be the only ones one would want to say characterize Kenyan English. Although the paper aimed primarily at just pointing out and describing the relevant features, not all possible candidates (for inclusion in the characteristics of Kenyan English) were. On the one hand there must be those that I have not noticed, as there are those I have but for which evidence – whether written or

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<sup>10</sup> James Rumford, personal communication, July 2000.

spoken – was scanty. On the other hand there are those that I have chosen not to discuss primarily because of limited space. Such are those that I would say are primarily lexical, rather than grammatical. One such case is that of the use of the 'wrong' preposition after a given word: a good example is the case of *with* which is frequent after the verb *depend*, as in *\*it depends with individuals*, in lieu of *upon/on*, as in *it depends on individuals*. A second example is the dropping of the infinitival particle *to* after some verbs where it is indeed always expected to occur. A frequent example is that of the verb *enable*: more often than not Kenyan English will have a sentence like *\*That would enable us finish the project* (instead of ... *enable us to finish...*). A third case is that of nominalizing adjectives, by letting them occur on their own and consequently allowing them to take articles where appropriate. It is thus common to hear: *\*My son is in primary*, *\*He is my second born*, and *\*His elder sister is doing secretarial*.

Secondly, it is highly plausible that at least some of the said characteristics of Kenyan English feature in other varieties of English as well. (And remember indeed those cases brought to my attention by A. F. Gupta, in personal communication, as being present in many other varieties of English around the world.) If, as assumed in this paper, they have developed as a result of the need to simplify the task of learning and using the second language, and since this is a strategy common to all L2 learners, it would not be surprising to find similar non-target-like forms in other places of the world where English as a second language is so widely used as in Kenya. In such a context, the high frequency of use of some non-target forms may lead to their being 'fossilized'. And since imperfect second language learning is to be expected anywhere this language is learnt in a non-native setting, it is only natural that such non-target-like forms should occur. One may even want to argue that for many learners-users whose data this paper has illustrated with one should not talk of 'imperfect learning' in the first place, because the Kenyan English forms they produced are those they were exposed to (e.g. in class) to begin with.

Finally, one would be tempted to equate the features described in this paper with what Trudgill (1995) calls 'pidginized forms of language which vary from time to time and from speaker to speaker' (p. 158). However, doing so would make them look just like random occurrences, something which would be countered by some of the data presented earlier. Admittedly, though, the same data would not allow one to exclude the variation 'from time to time' since they were not collected over a given period of time and for the same learners-users. However, concerning the variation 'from speaker to speaker', the available evidence would indeed allow one to assert that many of the Kenyan English forms described above represent at least strong tendencies that are accepted (if not used) by so many users of English in Kenya. Even though there may be some Kenyan English users who do not possess some of the structures described, their pervasiveness in the language could not be anything less than characteristic.

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