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## Rural-Urban Dichotomy and Linguistic Variability: Evidence from English Language as Spoken by Teachers in Kenya

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### Abstract

The research reported in this paper identifies and describes phonological and grammatical variations in the English spoken by teachers at Kenyan primary school level, correlates the variations observed with the teachers' locality - either urban or rural area - and discusses pedagogical implications of the emergent patterns. First, the results indicate that the teacher's spoken English varies from the British standard variety - the model of correctness at all the education tiers in Kenya - and second, that the location where the teacher has lived and worked in for a long duration significantly influences language variability. In terms of rural-urban dichotomy, the urban English speech is observed to approximate more to Received Pronunciation than the rural speech does. The greatest variation between these two settings (rural and urban) is especially pronounced in the phonological variables. Factors such as differences in patterns of language use, differences in access to technology and differences in attitude and motivation have been put forward to account for linguistic variability that relates to rural-urban dichotomy.

### Introduction

Njoroge (2011) observes that people from an urban background are likely to have more exposure to the language through the print and electronic media. On the other hand, a rural speaker's mother tongue is his or her main language of socialization. Most children from a rural background generally encounter English when they go to school and even then, English is mostly confined to the classroom and only when the teacher is present. The minute the teacher leaves the classroom, the pupils switch back to their ethnic languages with

which they are familiar. In some cases in the rural areas, teachers use the mother tongue as the medium of instruction even in the teaching of the English language (Kirigia, 1991). Between these two extremes are various other socio-economic groups whose competence in English, frequency of English language use, and exposure to standard forms of the language, vary widely (Njoroge, 2011).

All urban centres in Kenya are linguistically heterogeneous. However, the presence of one dominant ethnic language may usually be greater than that of other Kenyan ethnic languages that are spoken far from the regional location of the particular urban centre. For example, in Githurai estate, Nairobi, the majority of the inhabitants are Gikuyu while in Kondele estate, Kisumu, the Dholuo speakers are the majority. Outside the urban centres, every ethnic group has clearly defined regions traditionally associated with it. In urban areas, English is used in more domains than in the rural areas though the degree and spread of use depends on the particular urban centre.

The term 'urban area,' as used in this paper, represents a region where people of different ethnic languages meet and stay together for purposes of education, business or employment. In Kenya's rural areas, English remains the language of the school and in particular, the classroom language. The term 'rural areas,' as used in this paper designates those areas in the countryside, which are dominated by one particular ethnic language. This paper discusses the correlation between rural/urban dichotomy and linguistic variability as far as the use of English by the teachers of English in schools is concerned.

## **English in Non-native Contexts**

In some non-native English speaking nations, a great deal of research has been undertaken with a view to describing the linguistic forms of the variety of English spoken by the citizens (Platt, Weber & Lian, 1984). In a number of countries, for instance India and Singapore, there has been an adoption of the localized variety as the language of wider communication. Linguists in such countries have identified and codified a local standard variety of English. Thus,

we talk, for example, of Singlish<sup>13</sup>, which, despite the controversy, functions in Singapore as an important language of the media (Lemon, n.d.). In Nigeria, researchers such as Bamgbose (1995) and Bokamba (1984) have described what can be referred to as Nigerian English. Grammar books and dictionaries have been written and compiled so that teachers and other speakers of English in Nigeria may have some points of reference for the variety of English that is presently termed Nigerian English (Bamgbose, Banjo & Thomas, 1995). Chick and Wade (1997) also present features that mark what they refer to as Black South African English. To the best of my knowledge, however, little has been done to codify and put together forms that can characterize what is informally referred to as Kenyan English.

Research into some of the non-native varieties, such as the one used in Kenya, has lagged behind (Kembo-Sure, 2004; Kioko & Muthwii, 2001). One of the reasons highlighted for this lack of enthusiasm is the myth that the English taught in non-native contexts such as Kenya is the British standard (cf. Kenya Institute of Education, 2002). Another reason that is put forward is the fear that if a variety other than the native-speakers' is accepted as the appropriate model for education, it may degenerate into a very different language that will lack mutual intelligibility with the standard varieties. Third, there is the influence of the prescriptivists who analyze any deviation from the native speakers' varieties as errors (Kioko & Muthwii, 2001). The absence of research that describes English as used by speakers of English in Kenya as represented by teachers of English in the research on which this paper is based is thus timely.

## **The Language Situation in Kenya and the Place of English**

The Republic of Kenya Housing and Population Census (2009) reports that 75% of the population speaks languages belonging to the Bantu family, which include Gikuyu, Kamba, Luhya, and Kisii. Around 20% speaks Nilo-Saharan

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<sup>13</sup> See for example Rani Rubdy's (2003) analysis of realities and practice in language in education in Singapore. She notes that Singlish has emerged as the symbol of intraethnic identity and cultural integration in Singapore and that 70% of Singaporeans accept it as a marker of rapport and solidarity. It has been exploited in literary writings and in the media.

languages such as Dholuo, Maasai and Kalenjin. The rest speaks Cushitic languages, which comprise Somali, Oromo and Rendille. These ethnic languages serve as languages of group identity at the sub-national level.

English is used in a multilingual environment in Kenya. Unlike those who use it as their only code, Kenyans use English as only one of several codes. For example, most Kenyans have a proficient command of their ethnic language, Kiswahili and English while others even speak French, German or other Kenyan indigenous languages. Because of this phenomenon, there is bound to be much code mixing and switching, as well as lexical and phonological influences as these languages interact.

In Kenya, the importance of English increased after independence from Britain in 1963, which ended approximately sixty years of colonization (Mbaabu, 1996). English plays a significant role in Kenya as the language of education, administration, commerce and modernization (Abdulaziz, 1991). Kanyoro (1991) adds that English in Kenya is associated with socio-economic prestige. It is exclusively a high status language associated with white-collar jobs and major responsibilities within the government and the private sector. Mastery of English is a ladder to success and therefore, there is motivation for learning the language. As Muthiani and Muchiri (1987) observe, proficiency in English is often the yardstick by which young Kenyans are judged. English is indeed used as a measure of a person's educational achievement and success in life (Kembo-Sure, 2004).

Schmied (1991) observes that the British standard is still regarded as the standard norm among Kenyans. He finds that linguistic variations in English, as used in places such as Kenya, however, have covert prestige. He says that the vernacular (non-standard) forms of English seem to function as a symbol of group identity, which is used to signal national solidarity even by those who have, through study and travel, clear links with Standard English speakers, but who do not necessarily want to be associated with them in the national context.

## **Kenya's Language-in-education Policy**

The language-in-education policy in Kenya is spelled out in the Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training report, a guideline for the education system in Kenya (Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training, 1999). In the rural set-ups, the medium of instruction in the lower primary is the learner's mother tongue or the dominant language within the

school's catchment area. However, within Nairobi and other urban centres where the population is made up of people from different ethnic groups, Kiswahili is the medium of instruction. In upper primary, English is to be used as the medium of instruction throughout the country. To enhance concept formation and articulation in linguistic communication, children should continue to be taught in their mother tongue or the dominant language of the school environment until primary 3. During this period, English and Kiswahili, the official and national languages respectively, should be taught vigorously as subjects. In upper primary (primary 4 to 8), when the child has already mastered English and Kiswahili, English should then be introduced as the medium of instruction. The revised English syllabus used in Kenyan schools (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002) states that the reference point to be used in teaching English is the British Standard English, specifically Received Pronunciation (RP). It was the objective of this study to determine if teachers of English in Kenya schools used this standard in their teaching.

## **RP's Phonetics and Phonology**

RP is the prescribed model in Kenya's formal instructions. The manuals on RP's phonetics and phonology by Jones (1975) and Roach (1998) include clear descriptions of the phonemes and their articulation in RP. Briefly, RP phonemes are identified by means of the discovery technique of minimal pairs. Roach (1998) identifies 20 vowel phonemes (12 monophthongs and 8 diphthongs) and 24 consonants to make 44 phonemes in the phonemic inventory of RP. These RP phonemes are indicated by means of the appropriate phonemic symbols from the list of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) (Roach, 1998). The consonant phoneme /b/, for example, is classified as a voiced bilabial plosive while the phoneme /f/ is a voiceless labio-dental fricative. The phoneme /b/, for example, occurs initially in a word as in /beit/, medially as in /teibl/ and finally as in /slæb/. The teachers and learners in Kenya are expected to adhere to RP's phonetics and phonology.

## **Research Problem and Scope**

Much of the available research into the spoken English language in Kenya has concentrated on code switching (Nthiga, 2003), analysis of errors in learners' language at different educational levels (Nyamasyo, 1994), and issues in English language teaching methodologies (Gathumbi, 1995). However, hardly any of these approaches consider the interaction between English language and the indigenous languages, or how social variables such as gender and education interplay with English to reflect the socio-cultural changes that English has been made to undergo in Kenya. Likewise, Wardhaugh (1998) points out that

spoken forms of a language are not uniform entities but vary according to the area people come from, their social class, their gender and age, ethnicity, their level of education, among other social variables. Thus, the English language as it is used in, for instance, Kenya, is bound to show variation from the variety spoken in Britain due to differences in sociolinguistic contexts.

The research focused on analyzing spoken English as used by rural and urban teachers in Kenyan primary schools to identify variations. These are the features observed in the spoken English used by teachers in Kenyan primary schools that make it unique and distinct from the British standard variety, the norm of correctness in Kenya. Focusing on other social factors such as ethnicity, education, gender and age, despite their importance, would have made the scope too wide.

## **Rationale for Choice of Subjects**

The rationale of the choice of teachers of English at the primary school level rests on the premise that they are the ones charged with the responsibility of imparting to the learners the four language skills, namely reading, writing, speaking and listening (cf. Chaudron, 1995). In the Kenyan context, just like in many second and foreign language-learning contexts, learners get exposed to English through formal instruction and the majority get to hear an English word for the first time when they get to school. The teacher in such a case is the most important source of input and as Ellis (2000) observes, the learners' linguistic competence is greatly influenced by the characteristics of the input that the learners receive from their teacher. Ellis further states that some errors in the learner's language will derive from the way in which the teachers use the target language (cf. Gass & Selinker, 2001). These factors justify a study that examines spoken English used by teachers in the classroom.

## **Research Objectives**

The study aimed to:

- a) Identify phonological and grammatical characteristics of the variety of English as used by teachers in Kenyan primary schools.
- b) Describe phonological and grammatical differences between the variety of English used by these teachers and the British standard variety.
- c) Establish, by statistical means, the significance of the differences in linguistic usage between two groups of teachers that vary in the locality where they live: urban and rural.
- d) Outline pedagogic implications of the emergent sociolinguistic patterns.

# Methodology

## Research Design

The study was designed to investigate the relationship between one binary predictor variable (rural or urban dichotomy) and multiple continuously scaled linguistic dependent variables. According to Schneider (2004), research within the Language Variation Paradigm falls within quantitative research design. Essentially, the Variationist Paradigm (Labov, 1972) builds upon quantitative methodology, aiming to establish relationships between social factors and linguistic variables. Nevertheless, qualitative analyses help to illustrate the nature of linguistic variations).

## Sites, Population and Sample Size

To achieve the aims of the study, data was collected from teachers of English in the rural areas of Kenya's Bomet, Siaya and Thika districts and from Nairobi area, an urban setting. Judgemental sampling method and the social network approach (Milroy & Gordon, 2003) guided the researcher in choosing the required study sample. The underlying principle of judgemental sampling method entails identifying in advance the target variables. This then presupposes the type of respondents to be studied. Milroy and Gordon (2003) note that if the research questions highlight relationships between variables, or comparisons between groups, then judgement sampling is appropriate since it makes sense to select the sample in such a way that there is maximum chance for any relationship to be observed. The social network approach, on the other hand, looks at an individual in a speech community as having specified networks of relationships with other individuals whom he or she depends on and who in turn depend on him or her. Thus as a researcher, I was able to enter the field to collect the language data as a friend of a friend, and this aspect helped to reduce the Observer's paradox.

The study's target population were teachers of English in Kenyan upper primary schools. The research sample was made up of 48 primary school teachers. According to the distribution principle, a larger sample would not necessarily have given varied data but more examples of the same (Cheshire, 1982). In the same vein, Milroy and Gordon (2003) point out that variation studies do not require the statistical analysis of hundreds of speakers' records as variations can emerge even from samples as small as twenty-five speakers. Considering such views, the researcher concluded that a 48-member sample

would be sufficient to enable an exhaustive study of linguistic variations in the spoken English as used by teachers in the targeted areas.

### **Predictor Variable: Number of Years lived in Rural or Urban Dichotomy**

Teachers' location was determined by considering the number of years one had lived in the urban or rural area and this was the independent variable in the study. Location where one has lived and taught in for at least 5 years in this study is used to represent rural or urban domain; hence, there was need to take care of this during sampling procedure. Twenty-four of these teachers had lived and taught in rural schools for five years while twenty-four had lived in urban areas and taught there for a similar number of years.

### **Linguistic Dependent Variables**

The study adopts Wardhaugh's (1998) definition of a linguistic variable as a linguistic item, which has identifiable variants. Variation in language is an extremely complex phenomenon, and it would be quite unrealistic to attempt to analyze all its aspects. In this connection, the study limited itself to the analysis of the following linguistic variables:

- a) Phonological: plosives (p, b, t, d, k, g) and approximants (l, r).
- b) Fricatives
- c) **Nasals**
- d) Affricates
- e) Grammatical: use of the article (omission, redundant use and wrong choice); use of the preposition (omission, redundant use and wrong choice); pronoun copying and subject-verb agreement.

A little needs to be said about the variable of pronoun copying as used in the study. It refers to the occurrence of a noun phrase followed immediately by a pronoun with the same referent within a sentence or utterance. Unlike in English, this pattern is grammatical in most African languages (Schmied, 1991).



## **Fieldwork and Data Collection Procedures**

Classroom interactions during English lessons were tape-recorded three times to obtain the language data. Though the interactions during the first visit were tape-recorded, the language data were not used because the visit was only meant to take care of Observer's paradox. Since the aim in the research was to find variations in the spoken English of teachers and to capture these as naturally as possible, an initial visit helped to establish a more natural and relaxed environment thus lowering teachers' inhibitions. The first visit, therefore, helped to reduce teachers' anxiety and they had relaxed by the time I made the second one. Thus, only the one-hour language data tape-recorded during the second and third visits were coded and analyzed. After all the three visits, I played back the recording for the respondent who would then listen and point out whether there were some areas he/she did not like, so that they could be deleted. Happily, they never asked me to get rid of any section.

## **Methods for Quantifying the Linguistic Dependent Variables and Data Analysis**

The teachers' spoken language data was first transcribed, and then analyzed to identify the variants of each. Variation in the articulation of consonants was identified through the approach used by Roach (1998) and Wells (1982). Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik's (1985) approach was used for the grammatical variation. I also made use of Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary in determining a correct description of the specified variation. The second opinion of Mr Girling, a native RP speaker, was crucial in crosschecking the accuracy of the linguistic variations identified. After this, the total tokens for each variant were determined by counting frequency of occurrence of the specific variant in the language data of each teacher, in each of the two teacher-categories, and in the entire language data.

## **Results**

### **Nature of Variations**

Holding all factors constant (gender, ethnicity, education and other social factors), data analyses revealed that the English spoken by teachers in rural and urban primary schools in Kenya varied significantly from the British standard variety. This was noted mostly in the phonological variations. For

example, variations were noted in the use of the labio-dental fricatives [f] and [v]; approximants [r] and [l]; the alveolar fricatives [s] and [z]; the velar plosives [k] and [g] and the inter-dental fricatives [q] and [t] among others. Grammatical variations were also noted in the use of the article, preposition, subject-verb agreement and pronouns. For example, there was omission of an obligatory article, redundant use of a preposition and lack of agreement between the subject and the verb. The following examples drawn from the teachers' spoken data illustrate the nature of variation. The transcriptions are based on how the teachers pronounced the specific word.

## Phonological Variation

### (a) Rural 1

- 1) Sta[-n]d up and greet him... look at the seco[-n]d picture. When you come to the e[-n]d of a sentence there must be a full stop.
- 2) What? Ha [-n] ds up?
- 3) Yes try a[-n]d think which word it is.
- 4) What do you understa [-n]d by the word verb?
- 5) You fi[-n]d that Ali is not as old as Musa.

In the examples in sentences (1-5), there is omission of an alveolar nasal [n], which in a similar context, is expected in RP. For instance, in sentences (2) and (5), there is mission of an alveolar nasal sound segment in the words **hands** [hændz] and **find** [faɪnd] respectively. In the language data, the former is articulated as [hadz] while the latter is articulated as [faɪd]. The variant seems to occur only before the voiced alveolar plosive [d] as examples in 1 above show. From the data, it is also observed that the omission of the nasal sound occurs mostly in the final syllable. For example, in example (a) (4), the words understand [ʊndəstænd] has three syllables [ʊnd], [ə] and [stænd]. The omission of the alveolar nasal sound is only found in the final syllable and not in the initial one.

### Rural 1

That word is [lialais] (*realize*). Class say [lialais] (*realize*). I want those who have not [led] (*read*) to [li:d] (*read*). [meli] (*Mary*), please [li:d] (*read*).

### a) Rural 5

- 1) We talk of [lili] (*really*) when something is [veli] (*very*) small and another [veli] (*very*) big.

- 2) A cheetah can [**lan**] (*run*) [**veli**] (*very*) fast. The coconut [**tli**] (*tree*) is [**lili**] (*really*) tall.
- 3) He was [**laða**] (*rather*) disappointed. He was not [**feli**] (*very*) pleased.
- 4) As we had said earlier, adjectives [**desklaib**] (*describe*) a noun.

In a number of instances where the approximant [**r**] was expected in the RP, the lateral approximant was used as examples in (1) and (2) show. Other words which were supposed to be articulated with the approximant [**r**] but were produced with a lateral approximant [**l**] are **writing**, **porridge**, **very**, **removing**, **correct** and **serious**. Consequently, the words **very** [veri] and **correct** [kərekt] were articulated as [**veli**] and [**kɔlekt**] in the study data.

In addition, variation was noted in the use of voiced and voiceless labio-dental fricatives as in the following examples.

a) Urban 4

If you look at our book page eighty [**faif**] (*five*) write for me at least [**faif**] (*five*) sentences using the word [**fain**] (*vine*)

**Another phonological variation observed was in the use of bilabial plosives [p] and [b] as in the following examples.**

b) Rural 40

Once there was a [**pig**] (*big*) lion, staying in a forest... he tried his [**pest**] (*best*) to [**prek**] (*break*) the net, [**pat**] (*but*) he couldn't so the lion struggled. So, he used his teeth You can see some [**pɔdi**] (*somebody*) who is very rich. The lion was just walking [**postfuli**] (*boastfully*)

e) Rural 46

Yes when the [**pel**] (*bell*) rings. Yes a few days ago, you drew and [**lepɔd**] (*labelled*) many parts of the [**paisikɔ**] (*bicycle*) ...Say a [**pɔtl**] (*bottle*) to carry milk. A person who works who [**puilds**] (*build*) a house is called a [**puidler**] (*builder*). A person who works in a [**laiprari**] (*library*) is a [**laiprarian**] (*librarian*). A [**prodkasta**] (*broadcaster*) works in a newsroom.

A [**putʃa**] (*butcher*) works in a [**putʃari**] (*butchery*). The cashier works in a [**pank**] (*bank*).

In example 5, the word **bell** was articulated with sound [**p**] thus producing [**pel**]. Likewise, the word **labelled** [**leibld**] was articulated in

the study data as [leipɔd] instead of [leibld] in RP. Similarly, the words **bank** [bæŋk] and **bone** [bəun] were articulated as [pɒŋk] and [pɒn] respectively. It is worth noting that this particular variant occurred in word-initial and word-medial positions.

f) Urban 22

When you are introduced to a stranger by a friend, we [usuali] (*usually*) say “It is a [plesa] (*pleasure*) to meet you.”

g) Rural 24

You must have learnt this in science. A thermometer is used to [mesa] (*measure*) what? Can you say to [mesa] (*measure*) temperature?

In examples (f) and (g), the voiceless alveolar fricative [s] was used in the highlighted words, instead of the expected voiced post-alveolar fricative [ʒ] in RP. For instance in (g), the word **measure** [meʒə] was articulated in the study data as [mesa]. The use of variant [s] instead of the voiced post-alveolar fricative seems to be influenced by a mismatch between orthography and pronunciation. In the highlighted words in (f) and (g), the grapheme <s> is used in orthography but in pronunciation, the voiced post-alveolar fricative [ʒ] is the expected sound.

## Grammatical Variation

In this study data, variations were also observed in contexts where there was use of pronoun copying. In cases where a noun phrase subject was expressed, there were a number of cases in which the subject was followed by a pronoun referring back to the subject. Thus, the subject was expressed twice.

a) Rural 2

Soi's grandmother **she** took him to the bus stop because Soi had to leave early in the morning.

The grandmother **she** feared that Soi would be attacked. It was still very dark.

Think about what happens in a harbour, like Kenya's Kilindini harbour. Somebody? Very good. The containers **they** were being lifted up.

In the examples in (a), the occurrence of a pronoun immediately after the

noun phrases that function as the subject in the sentences can be noted. In so doing, it becomes as though there is occurrence of double subjects within the same sentence, though these two subjects have the same co-referent.

Use of the article displayed variation as illustrated below:

**b) Rural 40**

[omis. of indef.art. a] rat is a very small animal and [omis. of indef.art.a] lion is a big animal. So [omis. of def.art. the] lion, no [omis. of def.art. the] rat said...so [omis. of def.art. the] rat ran away... so [omis. of def. art. the] rat lived in [omis. of indef.art.a] hole.

In the examples highlighted in (b), there is the omission of either the definite article 'the' or the indefinite articles 'a' and 'an'. For example, the indefinite article a is needed to indicate that the noun 'rat' is a count noun and that it is being mentioned for the first time in the discourse. The second time the noun 'rat' is mentioned means that it has a direct anaphoric reference and, therefore, it requires that the definite article 'the' be used to indicate that the two nouns have co-reference relations. However, in the study data, the article was omitted as example (b) shows. There were also many instances of use of wrong preposition.

## **Explanation of Variation based on Rural-Urban Dichotomy**

In the statistical presentations outlined above, the patterns that emerge in terms of rural-urban dichotomy are that the spoken English of urban respondents in this study approximates more clearly to the British standard variety than the spoken English of their rural counterparts. For example, in all the linguistic variables focused on in the study, the percentage of occurrence and mean scores of all the phonological and grammatical variants are generally higher in the language data of speakers drawn from the rural areas than in the language data drawn from speakers in the urban areas.

A number of factors explain the variation observed in the present study between rural and urban speech forms. These explanations include (i) differences in patterns of language use in rural and urban settings (ii) differences in access to technology and (iii) differences in language attitudes and motivation.

In the aspect of differences in language use patterns in rural and urban settings, several studies in sociolinguistics have concluded that variation within a language can arise from one's location: whether one resides in a rural or in an urban setting (Schmied, 1991; Eisikovits, 1991; Britain, 2004; and Patrick, 2004). Schmied (1991), for example, reports that speakers from urban areas approximate more to the native-speaker standard forms at both phonological and grammatical levels than their rural counterparts do. Haynes (1992), in a study in the Caribbean, further observes that urban dwellers use more native-speaker forms than rural people do.

In studies on New Englishes, the pattern observed is that urban speech approximates more to the standard forms than rural speech. Platt and Weber (1980), for example, observe a decrease in the use of English in rural areas and lack of much English language use. Note that the speech of rural speakers has moved further from the standard variety than the speech of urban speakers in Malaysia. As they have less exposure to English and fewer occasions to use it, many rural speakers of English have a higher number of variants in their speech. In their study of the variety of English used by South African Indians, Mesthrie et al. (2000) also note that the use of the standard form variants is found more in the speech of urban speakers than that of rural speakers. The findings in this study, therefore, concur with what is in literature on the rural-urban dichotomy in language use patterns.

Another aspect of language use patterns that is part of the rural-urban differences is related to exposure to the English language (Lowenberg, 1991:393). Urban speakers use more English as compared to the rural ones and this ultimately leads to more exposure and interaction in the language (Muthwii, 1994). Muthwii (1994: 311) observes that unlike their rural counterparts, the urban respondents in her study used less Kalenjin and more English in their conversations. Because of more interaction in English, the urban speakers learn to use the standard forms in their speech. In so doing, the speech of urban speakers ends up approximating more to the standard variety than that of their rural counterparts does. As Markku (1991) observes in his study of urban and rural varieties of Hiberno-English in Ireland, rural varieties of English tend to have more variations and thus are far from the standard forms than the urban varieties. He concludes that although it is evident that the urban variety of Hiberno-English has some traces of Irish

impact, it has moved further towards standard British English than the rural variety. He suggests that the reason for this difference could be the closer contact that the urban speakers have with the outside world, which exposes them to the standard phonological and grammatical forms.

On the Kenyan sociolinguistic scene, Kioko and Muthwii (2001) observe that in the multi-lingual setting, more English is used in urban areas than in rural areas. This is because speakers in rural areas tend to share a mother tongue and English is rather restricted in domain of use. Consequently, speakers in urban areas are exposed to more English than those in rural areas. In rural areas, the local predominant ethnic language is used outside the classroom. English is often a third language in such environments.

With regard to the use of English, the urban population may have more standard forms in their speech. Muthwii (1994:63) suggests that this is because of the emergence of a standard variety of English in the urban areas, coupled with the fact that neighbourhoods are made up of all ethnic groups living together. Observations made in Muthwii (1994), reveal that most of the young people born and raised in Nairobi understood and used very little mother tongue. Most of the respondents sampled in her study conversed in English thus improving their English language use.

In describing Kenyan rural language use patterns, Abdulaziz (1982:105) notes that in a Gikuyu village only a few miles from multi-ethnic Nairobi, the language used is Gikuyu, both in the school and the market. A majority of teachers and business people in the region are Gikuyu speakers and, therefore, the preferred language is Gikuyu. Unlike urban dwellers, they hardly use English, thus they lack practice in the language. As Wolfram (1969) reports, speakers who have more contact with the target language and that use it more often in their daily lives approximate more to the standard.

The urban speakers are advantaged because urban areas are the places with the highest concentration of highly educated people (Angogo & Hancock, 1980). They observe that of the urban population, there are Africans who are more fluent in English than in their mother tongues (Angogo & Hancock, 1980, p.70). This leads to the use of forms that approximate more to the standard English.

Exposure and practice are paramount in helping a speaker of a target language know when and how to use particular linguistic forms (Chambers et al. (2004). Living in an urban area introduces one to more domains of English use. Due

to the multi-ethnic nature of urban centres, the language of communication in various domains is usually English. Speakers, therefore, encounter English variously and get to practise their spoken language. This helps them in the acquisition of standard pronunciation and gives them a chance to learn appropriate usage of particular grammatical features, such as the standard usage of the articles or the rules of subject-verb agreement. The situation is different in rural areas where English is hardly used at home, in the market, or in other domains such as church, social gatherings, and chief's meetings. Here, English is strictly a classroom language and it is also used occasionally in the staffroom or in the head teacher's office (Kembo-Sure, 2004). The ethnic language is the language used outside the classroom, at home, in the neighbourhood or in other social circles.

The language-in-education policy in Kenya is not strictly adhered to, especially in the rural areas (Kembo-Sure, 2004). While the language policy expects the teacher to use English as the medium of instruction from Standard Four onwards, some teachers in the rural areas hardly adhere to this requirement. Instead they teach in the learner's ethnic language even in their classes. Teachers hardly use English to communicate with either their pupils, their colleagues or parents; with such a scenario, practice in usage English language suffers.

In addition to differences in the patterns of language use, differences in access to relevant modern technology may explain the variation observed in the language data drawn from respondents from urban and rural settings. The influence of the media is higher in urban areas than in the rural areas. Although they are no longer learners of English, the teachers get an opportunity to receive input through various programmes offered on the television channels and radio broadcasting. They get an opportunity to listen to newscasters, pay attention to their pronunciation and grammatical structures, and get to hear standard forms from such sources. Such media sources provide linguistic models for the teachers who pick up the pronunciation and adapt it as their own. They get a chance to practise that pronunciation in the classrooms. This also helps to level ethnically marked variety in the teachers' pronunciation.

Some speakers in urban areas have access to the internet as there are more computers and telephones than in rural areas. All these are of great influence in the improvement of one's English. Through the internet, one gets to communicate with native speakers or other educated speakers who use the standard variety, thus improving one's English. If one comes across a word



that is difficult, one checks up the meaning and the pronunciation. In doing so, one gets to know its pronunciation, thus reducing phonological variation from the standard variety and its usage in the grammar of English.

Finally, the variation between the rural and urban speakers can be explained in terms of differences in attitudes and motivation in the use of English. Majority of urban speakers do not appreciate being identified with their ethnic languages when speaking English because they are desirous of fitting in to a wider world than their own (Kioko & Muthwii, 2001). The urban speakers aspire to speak non-ethnically marked English. Speakers who use ethnically marked English are made fun of by their listeners. Due to such pressure, speakers in urban areas become sensitive to their accents and are motivated to polish up their pronunciation. In so doing, they aspire to the standard accent in their spoken English. Such motivation is lacking in rural areas (Abdulaziz, 1982). In fact, one is stigmatized if one speaks in English in the rural area. One is seen as arrogant or boastful, a stranger and as one who wants to “exclude himself from us.” English does not express solidarity in the rural areas. One who speaks English in the rural areas may not be seen to belong to that specific ethnic group or culture. Kioko and Muthwii (2001, p.52) observe that even at the work place, speakers from rural setting use their ethnic languages. On the contrary, urban speakers aspire to speak non-ethnically marked English, one that is closer to the standard usage (Kioko & Muthwii, 2001, p.57). Some of the reasons given for the preference of a non-ethnic variety of English by urban speakers include the following: first, it brings national consciousness and unity because it has no mother tongue influence. It does not arouse tribal sentiments, biases or hatred because ethnicity is not highlighted. Its use creates integration among people from different ethnic groups. Second, it shows eloquence and professionalism. Third, it reflects international commonness and social balance. Urban speakers find this type of English appealing to both the local and wider community because it is mutually intelligible with other recognized varieties.

Urban speakers have a positive attitude towards reading (Muthwii, 1994). In fact, there is a better reading culture in urban areas, than is the case in rural areas. This, in a way, may expose the urban speakers to the standard usage of pronunciation and grammar more than it may expose the rural speakers. The urban speakers get a chance to read and perhaps share stories or facts in books with colleagues. This provides a forum where one practises not only pronunciation but also the correct usage of grammatical features, such as the use of articles and prepositions. One may end up benefiting from peer-correction when a variant is noted in his or her English.

## Implication

The study has also given a detailed analysis and discussion of the interaction between rural-urban dichotomy and the linguistic variables. It has specifically analyzed the relationship between the facts in terms of the location of the teacher, whether in an urban setting or a rural one, influences variation in the use of nasal, plosives, fricatives, affricates, approximants, the article, preposition, pronoun-copying phenomenon, and subject-verb agreement. It has been observed from the descriptive statistics that the spoken English of urban respondents records lower mean scores of the variations noted in nearly all the phonological and grammatical variables.

The results indicate that this dichotomy significantly influences language variability in a number of both phonological and grammatical variables focused on in the study. In terms of rural-urban dichotomy, the urban English speech is observed to approximate more to RP than the rural speech does. The greatest variation between these two settings (rural and urban) is especially pronounced in the phonological variables. Factors such as differences in patterns of language use, differences in access to technology and differences in attitude and motivation have been put forward in this chapter to account for linguistic variability that relates to rural-urban dichotomy. The observations noted in this study in relation to rural-urban dichotomy concur with the finding of researches in variationist sociolinguistics which indicates that exposure to a language improves a speaker's proficiency.

Lastly, the study has found out that there is a discrepancy between the theoretical norm (that the British standard English be used as the norm of correctness in Kenya's education system) and the reality on the ground (the actual model that the learner is presented with in the classroom). The finding that emerges is that the spoken English used in the classroom by teachers sampled in this study differs from the British standard variety. As observed earlier, this variation cuts across all the social variables.

## Conclusion

This paper has given a detailed analysis and discussion of the interaction between rural-urban dichotomy and the linguistic variables. It has specifically analyzed the relationship between the social variable and the variation in the use of nasal, plosives, fricatives, affricates, approximants, the article, preposition, pronoun-copying phenomenon, and subject-verb agreement. It has been observed from the descriptive statistics that the spoken English of

urban respondents record lower mean scores of the variations noted in nearly all the phonological and grammatical variables.

The greatest variation between these two groups is especially pronounced in the phonological variables. In explaining the difference between rural and urban spoken English, factors such as differences in patterns of language use, differences in access to technology and differences in attitude and motivation have been put forward in this chapter to account for linguistic variability that relates to rural-urban dichotomy. The observations noted in this study in relation to rural-urban dichotomy concur with the findings of researches in variationist sociolinguistics which indicate that constant exposure to a language improves a speaker's proficiency in that language.

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