CHAPTER 6

Does Editing Matter? Editorial Work, Endonormativity and Convergence in Written Englishes in South Africa

Haidee Kotze
University of Utrecht

6.1 Introduction

Normativity in language is a complex phenomenon that forms part of socially motivated processes of conventionalisation ensuring the diffusion and establishment of shared linguistic usage in a particular community. Norms are multidimensional. They have both an individual cognitive and a collective social dimension (Backus and Spotti 2012; Harder 2012). They can be both conscious (or explicit) and unconscious (or implicit) (Labov 1972). They can be both overtly codified and sanctioned by 'top-down' prescriptivist processes, and covertly emergent or bolstered by 'bottom-up' processes (see Cameron 1995; Curzan 2014; Hickey, ed., 2012; Kruger and van Rooy 2017). Moreover, the cognitive/social, conscious/unconscious, and prescriptivist/emergentist dimensions interact in complex ways.

The notion of normativity is central to influential theories of how English has been reshaped by its transplantation to various contexts across the globe through colonisation and globalisation (for example Kachru 1985, 1986; Schneider 2007). Schneider sees the underlying developmental process that leads to the establishment of postcolonial Englishes as taking place through mutual accommodation of at least two parties in the colonial context (the settler (STL) and indigenous (IDG) populations), involving the rewriting of group identities, and culminating in the emergence of 'a new nation with hybrid roots and new linguistic norms' (2007: 6). His five-phase model includes two phases overtly concerned with normative consolidation, which simultaneously 'solidify' a preceding developmental phase and form the springboard to a following one. In Phase 2, exonormative stabilisation, linguistic norms are based on a straightforward orientation towards the colonial centre from where

Phase 1, foundation, originates. Phase 4, endonormative stabilisation, crystallises the developments of the preceding Phase 3, nativisation, into an acceptance of local norms.

Schneider (2007) identifies convergence as a second important characteristic of a variety's progression to Phase 4, beyond the development of a local norm. Schneider's Dynamic Model emphasises the interaction of at least two strands of English in colonial and postcolonial settings (English spoken by the STL and IDG populations) and sees the history of individual varieties of postcolonial English as the convergence of these two strands, driven by increased contact and interaction between users from the two (or more) strands, as well as by constructions of unified nationhood that deliberately downplay linguistic heterogeneity (Schneider 2007: 51).

Normative orientation is mostly uncontested through the first two phases of foundation and exonormative stabilisation, and arises as a point of contention only in the nativisation stage, when there is a growing awareness of the 'deviance of some local linguistic usage from old norms of correctness' (Schneider 2007: 43). At this point, there is growing insecurity about linguistic norms, particularly strongly felt among educated users, who may feel themselves 'torn between two sets of norms' (Bamgbose 1998: 1). However, over time acceptance of local norms increases, not only in spoken interaction but also in formal written usage (Schneider 2007: 50) – at which point endonormative stabilisation can be said to have taken place.

Despite the emphasis on normativity in models and theories of World Englishes, there is comparatively little explicit theorisation of or empirical research on exactly *how* the processes of diffusion, acceptance, conventionalisation and codification of local norms take place across diverse spoken and written contexts. This chapter focuses on one important index of normativity, namely acceptance of a particular usage by the local publishing industry, specifically in the form of editorial practices (Bamgbose 1998). Building on work by Kruger and van Rooy (2017), it focuses on how editors may contribute not only to endonormativity but also convergence, using the formal, published written English produced by proficient users of the STL and IDG strands in South Africa as a test case.

Rather than focusing on a single linguistic feature and editors' treatment of this feature, this chapter argues that it is necessary to comprehensively model how editing affects the linguistic make-up of texts. Published texts that are subject to professional editorial work form part of the more formal end of the sociostylistic continuum, and are produced by proficient

writers – the 'educated users' invoked as the norm-setting segment of society by Bamgbose (1998), Kachru (1985) and Schneider (2007). Marked 'non-standard' features are unlikely to occur in these kinds of texts. Instead, distinctive features of a variety are more likely to be found in subtle quantitative differences in linguistic patterning. Even in spoken language, the differences between varieties tend to be created in inconspicuous but nevertheless powerful distinctions in

> their combinatory preferences, in their constructions, in the frequencies of their lexicogrammatical choices, collocations, word uses, and so on . . . the subconscious set of conventions regulating the norm level of speech habits, of what is normally done and uttered, the 'way things are said' in a community. (Schneider 2007: 91–2)

The importance of these 'combinatory preferences' in characterising different varieties of English is even more important in considering published written registers, which are far more normatively constrained and homogenised than spoken language or informal unpublished writing.

Against this background, this chapter explores how editing reflects and affects endonormativity and convergence in the STL strand of White South African English (WSAfE) and the IDG strand of Black South African English (BSAfE academic writing, guided by the following four questions:

1 To what degree does the unedited writing of BSAfE and WSAfE writers reflect stylistic convergence towards a local norm?
2 How does editing alter the writing of WSAfE and BSAfE writers?
3 Do editorial changes reflect a tendency towards exonormative or endonormative orientation?
4 Do the changes effected by editing lead either to an increase in stylistic distance between WSAfE and BSAfE texts or to convergence between the two varieties?

To answer these questions, this chapter presents a corpus-based quantitative comparison of the unedited and edited versions of academic texts (dissertations, theses, and academic articles) produced by WSAfE and BSAfE writers, using exploratory modelling techniques combined with the analysis of individual features. Section 6.2 first discusses in more detail the relationship between editorial practice, endonormativity and convergence in the World Englishes context generally and the South African context specifically. Section 6.3 outlines the methodology used in the study, focusing on the corpus composition, the statistical analyses used for the exploratory macro-analysis and the individual features selected

for analysis. Section 6.4 presents the findings of the analysis in two steps. First, the results of the overall analysis are presented, identifying the features that set unedited WSAfE and BSAfE apart, and the features that set edited WSAfE and BSAfE apart. Subsequent to this, two features identified as significantly distinguishing unedited and edited WSAfE and BSAfE (downtoners and possibility modals) are analysed in more detail, also including comparisons with available research on British English to assess endonormativity and convergence more directly.

6.2 Editing, Endonormativity and Convergence: South Africa in the World Englishes Paradigm

Cameron (1995: 34) highlights the importance of editors (who may go by a variety of titles, such as copy-editors, sub-editors or text editors in different sectors of the publishing industry) in the establishment of acceptable usage. In the context of World Englishes, the degree to which innovative forms are regarded as acceptable by the publishing industry is also frequently raised as a measure of endonormativity in postcolonial Englishes (see Bamgbose 1998). In this line of argumentation, editors are seen almost by default as part of a conservative community of language users, imposing the metropolitan, conservative linguistic norm in their efforts to enact standardisation and eliminate variability and unpredictability (Melchers and Shaw 2013: 36–7). Consequently editing is typified as a conservative action that blocks innovation.

However, as a local corps of editors is established in postcolonial contexts, opportunities arise for editors to sanction new and unconventional usages, thus removing the stigma of an innovative form as an error (see van Rooy 2011). Kruger and van Rooy (2017) propose that in contexts of weak external codification of local norms, as is the case for South Africa (see Bowerman 2012), editorial work provides an exceptionally stringent litmus test for the acceptance of local forms and usages. In this respect, there is another important consideration: editors may or may not be users of the variety or strand in question. In South Africa the vast majority of editors are either native English speakers or balanced Afrikaans/English bilinguals, while BSAfE users are vastly under-represented in the industry (see Kruger and van Rooy 2017). While the linguistic gatekeepers in South Africa are from the same context as BSAfE users and would have ample exposure to the variety, they are not typically users of the same variety. This imposes a more challenging context for the acceptance and legitimisation of innovative features, and where innovative features are

accepted by editors from the STL or other IDG strands, this provides strong evidence in favour of endonormativity (as well as, potentially, convergence; see further discussion below).

However, as Kruger and van Rooy (2017) argue, this editorial acceptance of new or unconventional usages is not the endpoint of the process. Rather, the importance of editorial intervention in establishing endonormativity hinges on its setting in motion a powerful, though largely invisible, conventionalisation–legitimisation feedback loop. If editors accept innovative features of a variety, it not only signals that a degree of endonormativity has been attained, but the fact that these features are then allowed to disseminate in print raises the frequency of input of the innovative feature in published media. Users are exposed to these innovative features, which increases their entrenchment and the likelihood that users will select them in their own text production, leading to a further rise in frequency in published texts, and further entrenchment for editors exposed to these texts – initiating a feedback loop that contributes to conventionalisation (Kruger and van Rooy 2017: 21–2). In this way, editors are creating one pathway by which norms can 'get into' or 'be taken up' by language users (Cameron 1995: 14–15), through simple frequency of exposure.

Editorial intervention may, in this way, also play an important role in convergence. Schneider (2007: 174, 188) points out that in South Africa (characterised as firmly established in Phase 4), converging tendencies for different strands of English have been weaker than elsewhere, as a consequence of the complexity of the sociolinguistic situation. Van Rooy (2014) argues that the assumption of convergence and homogeneity at the level of a country as a whole may not apply to countries with complex, multiple sites of contact, and may be better considered at local levels. Assessing the empirical evidence, van Rooy and Wasserman (2014) conclude that convergence between WSAfE and BSAfE is evident for some user groups at the level of pronunciation (see also Mesthrie 2010; Mesthrie et al. 2015; Wilmot 2014) and lexis (van Rooy and Terblanche 2010) – but not yet grammar.

In respect of the role of editing in convergence, several scenarios are possible. It may be that the original, unedited writing of IDG and STL users demonstrates this convergence in itself (a convergence that sets it apart from the native parent variety), in which case editors may endorse it, leaving this sociostylistic convergence unaltered. Alternatively, editors may introduce changes that increase the distance between the two varieties – potentially moving one variety closer to an exonormative orientation.

It may also be that the original, unedited writing of IDG and STL users demonstrates significant divergence in their preferences for linguistic patterning, with one strand more exonormative in orientation than the other. If editors reshape texts from the two varieties so that they become more homogenous, they are actively participating in imposing convergence – in the direction of either an exonormative or endonormative orientation. Once larger numbers of sociostylistically convergent texts circulate in a society, the same kind of feedback mechanisms that stimulate endonormativity may contribute to further homogenisation, in that writers may emulate the kind of convergent stylistic tendencies that they are exposed to in the texts that they encounter.

6.3 Methodology

6.3.1 Corpus Composition

The corpus used in this study is drawn from a larger corpus of unedited texts and their edited counterparts, produced in South Africa (see Kruger 2017). The compilation of this corpus is ongoing, and at the time of writing it consists of 384 text pairs of varying lengths, across academic, newswriting, creative, instructional and popular registers, amounting to approximately 4 million tokens in total. All texts were written in South Africa in roughly the last decade and were edited by professional South African editors. Some metadata for authors and editors are available, allowing for a distinction between texts created and edited by users of the STL and IDG strands.

The current analysis focuses only on the academic texts in the corpus (including journal articles, dissertations and theses), since this is the only register in which both the STL (WSAfE) and IDG strands (BSAfE) are currently represented to a degree that allows for comparison. However, against the background of the discussion in Section 6.1 and Section 6.2, academic writing may also be seen as particularly suited to the current investigation. First, in the form included in this corpus (postgraduate student and professional academic writing) it is, by definition, produced by highly proficient writers – the norm-setting segment of society. Second, academic writing is at the top end of the sociostylistic continuum, thus making it particularly useful in evaluating norms for formal writing, the most stringent test for endonormativity.

The total subcorpus amounts to around 665,000 tokens (see Table 6.1). It should be noted that the WSAfE component is

Table 6.1 *Corpus composition*

	Tokens (unedited)	Tokens (edited)	Total
BSAfE (22 texts)	285,520	287,567	573,087
WSAfE (9 texts)	45,400	46,218	91,618
Total	330,920	333,785	664,705

substantially smaller than the BSAfE component: this reflects the typical distribution of editorial work for academic writing in the language-services agencies that contributed texts for the corpus. Each text in the corpus analysed here is produced by a different author; what the discrepancy in size in the corpora also implies is that the BSAfE corpus represents the work of a larger sample of users. While the current analysis takes no account of effects of sociolinguistic factors like age and gender, an inspection of available metadata suggests that the two groups are largely comparable in these respects.

6.3.2 Statistical Analysis

The aim of the analysis is to model comprehensively in what ways *unedited* BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing differ most strongly, and in what ways *edited* BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing differ from each other, in order to arrive at an understanding of how editing shapes text production and how this may reflect and affect both endonormativity and convergence. Following the claim that 'even standard forms of PCEs have their characteristic patterns and grammatical features' but that these 'tend to be less conspicuous and not overtly branded' (Schneider 2007: 82–3), this study develops an inductive method to explore how editing reshapes the linguistic composition of texts. It operationalises the notion of linguistic composition by using the set of sixty-seven linguistic features used by Biber (1988) to analyse register variation. (See Appendix 1 for the full list of features and the abbreviation for each.) The Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (Nini 2014) was used to tag these linguistic features and calculate a normalised frequency per 100 words for each text in the corpus.

The most parsimonious approach to investigating how editing reshapes academic texts in the different varieties would be to model which of the features distinguish the unedited and edited versions of WSAfE and BSAfE texts, respectively, using a method like logistic regression. However, this kind of analysis is not possible using the current dataset. The main

consideration is that the observations in the two groups (the unedited and edited subcorpora) are not independent from each other, thus violating the independence assumption that applies to (for example) logistic regression. To solve this problem, a more indirect approach was followed, first comparing the *unedited* BSAfE and WSAfE, and then comparing the *edited* BSAfE and WSAfE to identify how editing alters the features that distinguish the two varieties.

In selecting the modelling method, a key consideration was using a method suitable to a dataset with a small number of observations, and a large number of predictors (the 'large p small N' problem; see Tagliamonte and Baayen 2012: 161). This type of dataset is unsuited to traditional regression methods, which overfit the data. Instead, I use random forests analysis, an ensemble-based statistical learning technique for non-parametric regression and classification using recursive partitioning (see Strobl, Hothorn and Zeileis 2009 and Strobl, Malley and Tutz 2009 for details). It is based on classification and regression trees, and uses a 'voting' (or averaging) process over a randomly generated ensemble of trees, rather than a single tree, to predict which of a set of predictors significantly affect an outcome variable (see Tagliamonte and Baayen 2012 for an intuitive description of how this statistical process is implemented). Random forests analysis is suited to non-parametric data, datasets where collinearity of predictor variables may be an issue, and datasets of the 'large p small N' kind (Tagliamonte and Baayen 2012: 161).

The sixty-seven linguistic features from Biber (1988) are used as predictor variables, with the dependent or outcome variable the variety: BSAfE or WSAfE. In other words, the analysis determines which of the sixty-seven linguistic features (all considered together in the model) most strongly predict whether a given text belongs to the BSAfE or WSAfE strand – first for the unedited texts, and then for the edited texts. I use the implementation of random forests analysis in the R package 'randomForest' (Liaw and Wiener 2002), together with a wrapper algorithm implemented in the R package 'Boruta' (Kursa and Rudnicki 2010). The Boruta package uses random forests but adds a subsequent layer of statistical analysis to determine which of the predictor variables identified are statistically significant in determining the outcome variable. Kursa and Rudnicki (2010) provide a detailed explanation of how the Boruta algorithm works; see Dutta (2016) for an intuitive description. A maximum of 1,000 iterations was set as parameter for the Boruta algorithm, and the analysis was rerun multiple times to ensure the stability of the findings. The output from this analysis was cross-checked using the variable importance plots generated by 'randomForest'.

The same analytical procedure was applied to the unedited WSAfE and BSAfE texts, and the edited WSAfE and BSAfE texts, to gain an overall understanding of how editing has altered the linguistic relation between the two varieties. Of specific interest is whether the same predictors distinguish between the edited and unedited versions of the two varieties, or whether other predictors play a role – which may provide evidence for the areas in which editorial intervention *most saliently* reshape the two varieties.

It is acknowledged that this frequency-based modelling method has limitations. However, the advantage of this method is that it allows for the identification of the linguistic features that most strongly distinguish the varieties (in unedited and edited form), while simultaneously taking account of a large set of features. In this chapter, it is therefore used as a first step in identifying the linguistic features that distinguish BSAfE and WSAfE in both unedited and edited forms, leading to an understanding of how editing may reshape the two varieties in relation to each other.[1]

The last step of the analysis explores in more detail how these differences are related to the editing process, and how editing plays a role in both reflecting and promoting endonormativity and convergence. Two predictors identified as important in the overall analyses (downtoners and possibility modals; see further discussion in Section 6.4.1) are investigated in more detail by directly comparing frequencies in the unedited and edited BSAfE and unedited and edited WSAfE, with reference to frequencies attested in published British English academic writing (primarily from Biber 1988). Once again, statistical analysis is problematised by the structure of the dataset, and this part of the analysis is therefore quantitative, but no inferential statistics are used.

6.4 Results and Discussion

6.4.1 *Macro-Analysis: Factors Distinguishing Unedited WSAfE and BSAfE, and Edited WSAfE and BSAfE*

Figure 6.1 shows the results of the random forests analysis to determine which of the sixty-seven linguistic variables have the strongest predictive power in distinguishing **unedited** WSAfE and BSAfE. The analysis

[1]Another limitation of the macro-analysis is that it does not include a comparison with British English, for which (to my knowledge) no comparable corpus of parallel unedited and edited academic texts is available. This limitation of the macro-analysis is to some degree dealt with in the micro-analysis in Section 6.4.2, where comparisons with published British English academic writing are drawn based on existing research.

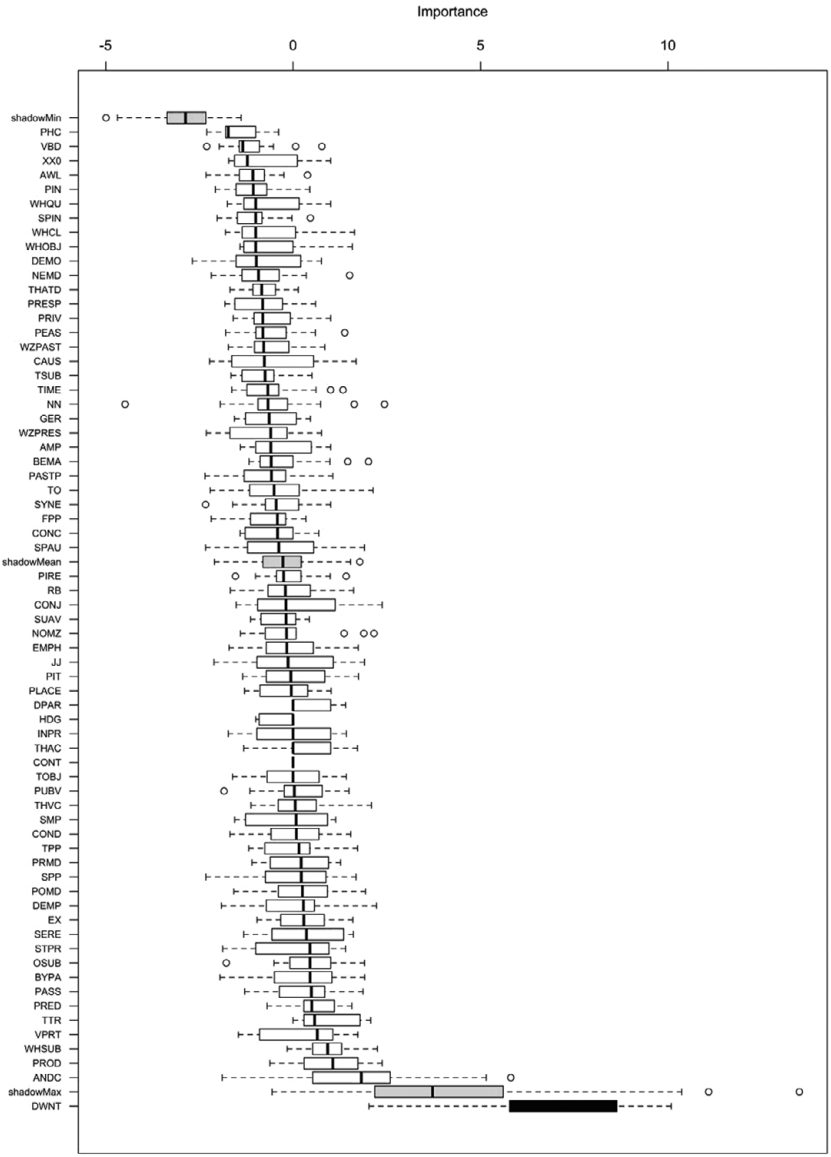

Figure 6.1 Variable importance for unedited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing. Black boxes indicate variables that have significant predictive power to distinguish between unedited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing; grey boxes mark shadow variable minimum, mean, and maximum.

demonstrates that a single feature is identified as strongly distinguishing between unedited academic writing produced by BSAfE and WSAfE writers, respectively: the frequency of downtoners (*almost, barely, hardly, merely, mildly, nearly, only, partially, partly, practically, scarcely, slightly* and *somewhat*).

Figure 2 shows the results of the random forests analysis to determine which of the sixty-seven linguistic variables have the strongest predictive power in distinguishing **edited** WSAfE and BSAfE.

Three features are identified as significantly distinguishing between edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing. One of these, the frequency of downtoners, is also identified as distinguishing between unedited BSAfE and WSAfE, though less strongly so. Two additional features play a significant role in distinguishing the edited varieties: the frequency of possibility modals (*can, could, may* and *might*), and the frequency of clausal coordination with *and*.

The first point to be made in respect of these overall findings is that when a large set of features is considered together, the number of features strongly distinguishing academic writing in the two varieties, in either unedited or edited form, is comparatively small, supporting Schneider's (2007) claim that the differences between varieties (or strands of a variety) boil down to subtle sociostylistic differences. However, the findings of this analysis should not be taken to claim that there are no differences between the varieties (or between unedited and edited texts) for other features. Kruger (2017), for example, shows how editing significantly decreases the incidence of *that*-complementiser omission, increases the frequency of some kinds of linking adverbials, and decreases syntactic complexity. The large-scale analysis presented here allows us to identify which features *most strongly* distinguish (academic writing in) the two varieties, in the presence of all the other features.

A second point arising from a comparison between Figures 6.1 and 6.2 is that more features appear to strongly distinguish the edited varieties than the unedited varieties, which suggests that editing introduces increasing divergence between the two varieties. However, this inference is not straightforward: the fact that a feature distinguishes the edited varieties (but not the unedited) does not necessarily mean that editors dramatically changed this feature in particular; rather, changes to other features may have changed the importance level for the feature in question in distinguishing the two varieties. This point will be discussed in more detail in Section 6.4.2.

When the three features identified as particularly important in this analysis are considered, possibility modals and downtoners are clearly related in both being resources for the expression of modality, part of the interpersonal function of language (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004).

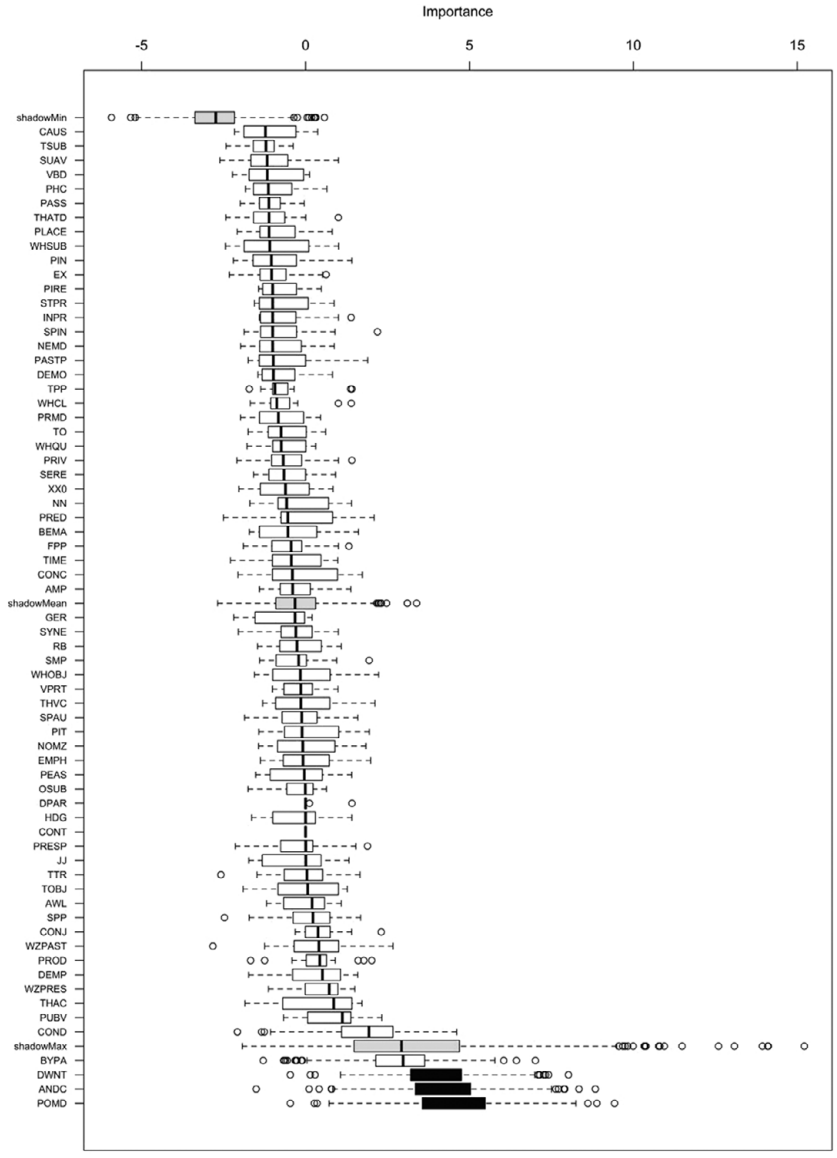

Figure 6.2 Variable importance for edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing. Black boxes indicate variables that have significant predictive power to distinguish between edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing; grey boxes mark shadow variable minimum, mean, and maximum.

Modality creates an opportunity for the dialogic assessment of a proposition between the text producer and text recipient: 'modality construes a region of uncertainty where I can express, or ask you to express, an assessment of the validity of what is being said' (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 116). Modal auxiliaries are the primary grammaticalised resource for expressing modality; however, lexical resources are also used, in the form of modal adjuncts (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 125–32). While both these resources are strongly associated with informal spoken registers (see Biber 1988), they also have a specialised function in academic discourse, where they fulfil a hedging function (see Hyland 1996, 1998; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007).

Distinct frequency patterns as well as innovative collocational patterns and functional innovations in the use of modal auxiliaries and other markers of modality have been identified by previous studies as important features of WSAfE as well as BSAfE (see, for example, de Klerk 2003; Makalela 2004; Mesthrie 2004; Rossouw and van Rooy 2012; van Rooy 2011; van Rooy and Wasserman 2014; Wasserman and van Rooy 2014). Against this background, the following section presents a brief detailed analysis of the use of downtoners and possibility modals. The discussion is based on the visual inspection of boxplots to assess the nature of the differences for these features in the unedited and edited versions of the two varieties. In this section, therefore, the analytical focus shifts from comparisons of the unedited varieties, and a comparison of the edited varieties, to a direct comparison of how the unedited and edited versions of the two varieties differ. In this discussion, comparisons with edited British English academic writing are also made, on the basis of existing research, specifically to investigate whether usage of these two features in BSAfE and WSAfE is aligned with or distinct from British English usage, whether editorial changes suggest a movement closer to, or away from, British English usage, and whether editorial changes create convergence or further divergence between the two varieties.

6.4.2 *Micro-Analysis*

Downtoners

Downtoners are adverbs that 'scale down' the effect of the modified item (Biber et al. 1999: 55). They are particularly common in academic writing, where they are used in a hedging function to indicate probability or reliability (Biber 1988: 240). As shown in Figure 6.3, the downtoners included in Biber (1988) (*almost, barely, hardly, merely, mildly, nearly, only,*

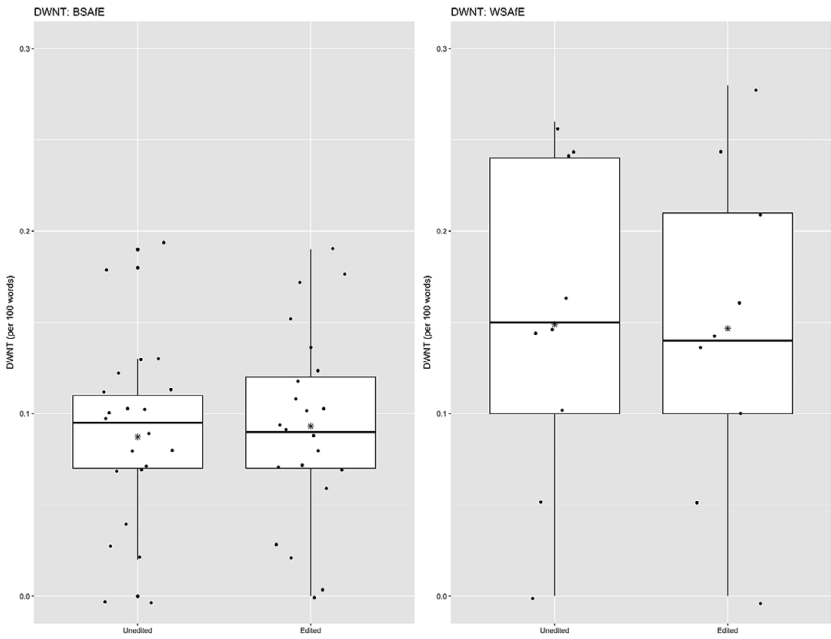

Figure 6.3 Frequency of downtoners (per 100 words) in unedited and edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing

partially, partly, practically, scarcely, slightly and *somewhat*) are used less frequently in BSAfE compared to WSAfE academic writing. In BSAfE academic writing, downtoners occur at a median frequency[2] of one per 1,000 words in the unedited corpus, and 0.9 per 1,000 words in the edited corpus. In WSAfE downtoners are about 50 per cent more frequent, occurring a median of 1.5 times per 1,000 words in the unedited corpus, and 1.4 times in the edited corpus. Editorial intervention clearly makes hardly any change to this stylistic difference between the two varieties. While a detailed analysis of individual downtoners falls outside the scope of the analysis in this chapter, a cursory analysis indicates that the effect is almost entirely the consequence of the use of a single downtoner, *only*.

[2] In the discussion I report median frequency, normalised in the discussion to a basis of 1,000 words (although in the graphs, and statistical analysis, frequencies are normed to 100 words). The norming basis of 1,000 for the discussion is selected as a basis of comparison with other studies. Medians are reported as measure of central tendency. Given the non-parametric distribution of the data, means are easily skewed by outlier values. It should be noted that the other studies I use as basis of comparison report mean values; mean values are reflected in the plots by asterisks.

In both varieties, downtoners occur less frequently than in British English academic writing,[3] where they are used at a mean frequency of 2.5 times per 1,000 words (Biber 1988: 255). WSAfE and BSAfE academic writing thus both diverge from British English academic writing in their use of downtoners, but BSAfE diverges most strongly and WSAfE remains closer to British English usage in this register. Makalela (2004: 362) makes the general claim that BSAfE overuses modality markers with downtoning function and underuses those with intensifying functions, which he links to face-preserving cultural tendencies. The findings reflected in Figure 6.3 do not support the first of these claims: compared to both WSAfE and British English, BSAfE uses downtoners less frequently.

Possibility Modals

Possibility modals are identified as a linguistic feature that strongly distinguishes edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing – but not unedited. At face value, this suggests that it is editing that introduces divergence in usage for possibility modals where convergence exists in edited writing; however, as shown in Figure 6.4, this does not appear to convincingly be the case.

Overall, the possibility modals *can, could, may*, and *might* are more frequent in WSAfE than in BSAfE academic writing – echoing the more extensive use of modality markers also evident in the use of downtoners. WSAfE academic writing uses possibility modals at a median frequency of 5.5 (unedited) and 5.4 (edited) per 1,000 words (similar to the mean rate of 5.6 per 1,000 words reported for academic writing by Biber 1988: 255). BSAfE academic writing uses possibility modals less frequently, at a median frequency of 3.5 (unedited) and 3.6 (edited) per 1,000 words. In respect of the use of possibility modals in academic writing, WSAfE and BSAfE appear clearly to diverge, with WSAfE similar to British English, and BSAfE distinct. This divergence is evident in both unedited and edited writing; editors do not make any significant changes to the text, overall. The fact that possibility modals are identified as distinguishing between the edited varieties but not the unedited is therefore not the consequence

[3] I acknowledge that the comparison with findings in Biber (1988) may be confounded by short-term diachronic changes. However, as this is the closest comparable data (using the same operationalisations in the same register), and academic writing is slow to reflect stylistic change, this comparison is nevertheless used in this chapter, with comparisons with contemporary British academic writing foreseen as a future research possibility.

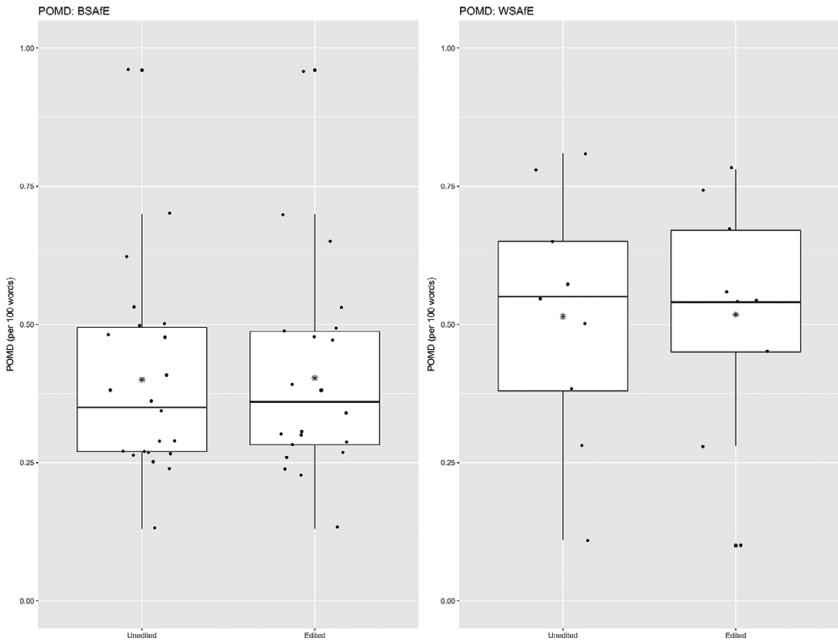

Figure 6.4 Frequency of possibility modals (per 100 words) in unedited and edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing

of dramatic changes to the feature itself, but rather of changes to other features that alter its relative importance as predictor.

There is limited corpus research comparing the modals of WSAfE and BSAfE directly (see van Rooy and Wasserman 2014). Rossouw and van Rooy (2012) and Wasserman and Van Rooy (2014) demonstrate a clear divergence in modal usage between WSAfE and its parent variety British English, particularly in respect of the use of modals of obligation and necessity. However, as far as BSAfE is concerned, there is limited research, especially on the writing of proficient users. There is some research on the use of innovative constructions like *can be able to* in spoken interaction and student writing (see de Klerk 2006; van Rooy 2011) and the overuse of modal auxiliaries in student writing (see van Rooy 2005). Mesthrie (2004: 964) identifies a preference for *can* and *will* in contexts where native speakers would prefer *could* and *would*. In a historical study of modals in written registers in WSAfE and BSAfE, van Rooy and Wasserman (2014) identify an overall increase in modal frequency in BSAfE over time (running counter to the trend of decreasing modal frequency identified

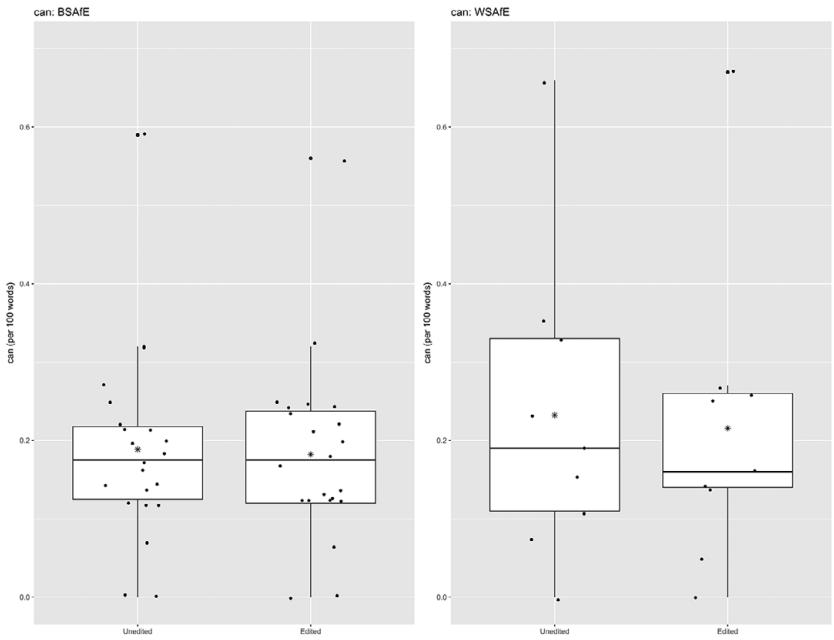

Figure 6.5 Frequency of *can* (per 100 words) in unedited and edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing

in studies of native varieties; see Collins 2009), such that by the end of the twentieth century, modal auxiliaries are more frequent in BSAfE than WSAfE. However, they also demonstrate that changes are highly variable for individual modals. With this in mind, I briefly consider two of the four individual possibility modals: *can* (Figure 6.5) and *may* (Figure 6.6).

While this chapter does not allow for detailed analyses of functions or innovative usages, the use of these two modals is briefly discussed in relation to their function in expressing modality in academic writing specifically. *Can* and *may* share a high degree of semantic overlap (Collins 2009: 91), and the choice of one rather than the other is conditioned by a complex set of intra- and extra-textual factors (see Gries and Deshors 2014 and references cited). According to Biber et al. (1999: 491–3), in academic writing *could, may* and *might* are almost without exception used with epistemic (external) rather than deontic (internal) meanings to express an assessment of possibility, with *may* extremely common in this function (see also Facchinetti 2003). Collins (2009) provides a more detailed assessment in the distinction between epistemic and dynamic possibility (see also

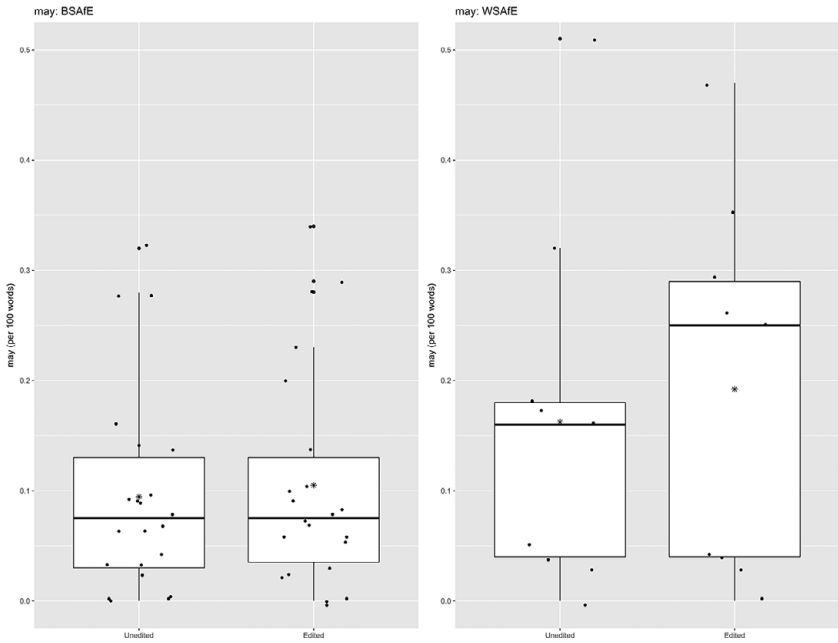

Figure 6.6 Frequency of *may* (per 100 words) in unedited and edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic writing

Palmer 2001), with epistemic possibility anchored in the speaker's knowledge, and dynamic possibility anchored in situations external to the speaker, closely associated with ability meanings.

According to Collins (2009), the epistemic possibility meaning is dominant for *may*, with the dynamic possibility meaning of minor importance. For *can*, dynamic possibility is the dominant meaning. The semantic overlap thus arises primarily where *can* and *may* are used with dynamic rather than epistemic modality (Facchinetti 2003: 304): where the modal does not express 'the writer's subjective attitude towards the truth of the proposition' but instead 'an appreciation of the factuality of the state of affairs' (Facchinetti 2003: 304). This usage is particularly common in academic writing and thus presents a potential case where a choice between *can* and *may* arises. A further point pertinent to the discussion here is that *may* is regarded as 'the chief exponent of epistemic possibility in British English' (Coates 1995: 64) but has connotations of formality in American English.

As shown in Figure 6.5, in unedited and edited BSAfE academic writing *can* occurs at a median (and mean) frequency of around 1.8 per 1,000 words

(compared to the mean value of two per 1,000 words for contemporary BSAfE writing across a range of registers reported in van Rooy and Wasserman 2014: 60). Editing makes hardly any difference to the frequency or distribution of *can* in BSAfE academic writing. In unedited WSAfE *can* occurs at a slightly higher median frequency of 1.9 per 1,000 words (and with a greater range); editing strikingly reduces the range and the median frequency to 1.6 per 1,000 words (compared to the mean frequency of 1.9 per 1,000 words, across a range of registers, reported by van Rooy and Wasserman 2014: 60). While the difference in measures of central tendency is not particularly marked, in distribution the edited WSAfE resembles unedited and edited BSAfE more closely than it does the unedited WSAfE. Editing here does seem to create some convergence effect for the two varieties – but the convergence effect appears to be created by adjustment of WSAfE to the pattern more closely resembling BSAfE.

Example (1) shows a typical usage of *can* (where *may* would be more likely in native writing) from the BSAfE corpus, left unchanged in the edited text, demonstrating its typical function of hedging in academic writing.

(1) Instead, an analysis of the difficulties mentioned above relates to specific aspects of financial management like roles and responsibilities, financial accountability and, it can be argued, the often misplaced attribution of failing financial management at schools on the SGB and principals. (A-119-O/E)

Figure 6.6 summarises the frequency of *may* in the unedited and edited BSAfE and WSAfE academic texts. Wasserman and Van Rooy (2014: 60) find that *may* is the one modal that is still significantly more frequent in WSAfE than BSAfE by the end of the twentieth century, occurring at a mean frequency of 0.8 per 1,000 words in WSAfE versus 0.5 per 1,000 words in BSAfE writing. In the academic corpus used in this study, *may* is overall more frequently used, as expected, but the same pattern of a higher frequency in WSAfE is evident. *May* is already more frequent in unedited WSAfE academic writing, and editors increase the frequency of *may* even further. Unedited and edited BSAfE demonstrates a very homogenous and very stable pattern, with a median frequency of 0.8 per 1,000 words, and limited variability. For unedited WSAfE, the median frequency of *may* is at twice this level, at 1.6 per 1,000 words, and editing further increases it to 2.5 per 1,000 words. In terms of the usage of *may* in academic writing, BSAfE and WSAfE therefore appear to diverge, with editing further intensifying the divergence.

At least some of the increased frequency of *may* in the edited WSAfE texts is the result of replacing *can* with *may* (even in contexts where the ability meaning of *can* is fairly strongly present), as shown in Example (2). This contrasts with Example (1) from the BSAfE corpus, where no change is made even though the ability meaning of *can* is not implied. These kinds of changes may also account for some of the drop in frequency in *can* evident for edited WSAfE (see Figure 6.5). It appears therefore that for WSAfE academic texts only, editors align the text with the British preference for *may* remarked on by Coates (1995: 64).

(2) This report identifies various emerging domestic tourist markets and proposes different strategies which can be used to reach these markets. (A-049-O)

This report identifies various emerging domestic tourist markets and proposes different strategies which may be used to reach these markets. (A-049-E)

6.5 Conclusion

Overall, BSAfE and WSAfE academic texts are stylistically distinct in that the former appear to underuse modality resources in comparison to the latter (and to British English). This is in line with other findings demonstrating that non-native academic writing uses hedging less frequently (and with a more restricted range) than academic writing by native users (Ädel and Erman 2012). This study provides some support for endonormativity – but an endonormativity that is located at the level of the individual varieties (and in particular registers) rather than at the level of a convergent South African English more generally, in line with the argument in van Rooy (2014). BSAfE academic writing is generally stylistically distinct from WSAfE and British English in the use of downtoners and possibility modals, and the fact that editors (from WSAfE and Afrikaans English backgrounds) do not appear to make substantial changes to these features suggests an acceptance of a distinct local norm. For WSAfE the evidence of a distinct endonormativity is less strong: as far as the use of possibility modals is concerned, and especially the use of *may*, WSAfE appears to be more closely aligned with British English, and editors appear to make changes that align usage in WSAfE texts even more closely to British English usage. There is therefore some evidence of a stronger exonormative orientation in academic writing style in WSAfE, further reinforced by editing in ways that are not the case for BSAfE.

There are somewhat different patterns for the two varieties in the use of downtoners and possibility modals. In the case of possibility modals, WSAfE patterns more closely in usage frequency with British English, with BSAfE distinct. In the case of downtoners, there is a cline, with both WSAfE and BSAfE distinct from British English, but the latter more strongly so. It may be the case that there is an ongoing shift in WSAfE towards a use of modal resources that is more similar to that of BSAfE as local norm (thus convergence), and that this process is at present visible only in the more 'flexible' lexical resources for marking modality (i.e. downtoners), whereas the core grammatical resources are slower to change. This interpretation is in line with the claims by other scholars that convergence in the grammatical domain is limited.

In general, editors appear to accept BSAfE stylistic preferences and almost never adjust these to be in line with either WSAfE or British English usage, thus contributing to the endonormativity of BSAfE academic writing by endorsing local usage. This also means that, by and large, the divergence between the two varieties is maintained by editorial intervention – or even strengthened, as the case of *may* illustrates. Where editors do make changes, it appears that the effect is to shift WSAfE academic writing towards a more exonormative style, increasing the stylistic distance between the two varieties. Editors therefore allow and reinforce local norms for BSAfE, but tend to direct WSAfE (already more ambiguous in its development of a distinct local norm in the written domain) to external norms. The South African situation may therefore be characterised as demonstrating a kind of multiple and varied endonormativity at more local (rather than national) levels, and little evidence of convergence – in line with the assessment of van Rooy (2014).

These claims should be regarded as tentative, and interpreted against the limitations of this study. They require further investigation by replication using larger and more balanced corpora, and different registers, as well as a direct comparison with a comparable corpus of unedited and edited British English to more directly assess endonormative and exonormative orientation. Expanded sets of features should be investigated, to investigate whether other resources for modality (or other features) reflect the same kinds of patterns. Furthermore, it is clear that the purely frequency-based analysis followed in this chapter is limited, and more detailed analyses and quantification of editorial changes are essential to further investigate these exploratory findings.

REFERENCES

Ädel, Annelie and Britt Erman (2012). 'Recurrent word combinations in academic writing by native and non-native speakers of English: a lexical bundles approach', *English for Specific Purposes* 31: 81–92.

Backus, Ad and Massimiliano Spotti (2012). 'Normativity and change: introduction to the special issue on *Agency and power in multilingual discourse*', *Sociolinguistic Studies* 6(2): 185–208.

Bamgbose, Ayo (1998). 'Torn between the norms: innovations in world Englishes', *World Englishes* 17(1): 1–14.

Biber, Douglas (1988). *Variation across Speech and Writing*. Cambridge: University Press.

Biber, Douglas, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad and Edward Finegan (1999). *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. London: Pearson Education.

Bowerman, Sean (2012). 'Standard South African English', in Raymond Hickey (ed.), *Standards of English: Codified Varieties around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 198–212.

Cameron, Deborah (1995). *Verbal Hygiene*. London: Routledge.

Coates, Jennifer (1995). 'The expression of root and epistemic possibility in English', in Joan L. Bybee and Suzanne Fleischman (eds.), *Modality in Grammar and Discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 55–66.

Collins, Peter (2009). *Modals and Quasi-Modals in English*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Curzan, Anne (2014). *Fixing English: Prescriptivism and Language History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Klerk, Vivian (2003). 'Towards a norm in South African Englishes: the case for Xhosa English', *World Englishes* 22(4): 463–81.

De Klerk, Vivian (2006). *Corpus Linguistics and World Englishes: An Analysis of Xhosa-English*. London: Continuum.

Dutta, Debarati (2016). 'How to perform variable feature selection (i.e. pick important variables) using Boruta Package in R', www.analyticsvidhya.com/blog/2016/03/select-important-variables-boruta-package/ (last accessed 18 May 2019).

Facchinetti, Roberta (2003). 'Pragmatic and sociological constraints in the functions of *may* in contemporary British English', in Roberta Facchinetti, Manfred Krug and Frank Palmer (eds.), *Modality in Contemporary English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 301–27.

Gries, Stefan Th. and Sandra Deshors (2014). 'Using regressions to explore deviations between corpus data and a standard/target: two suggestions', *Corpora* 9(1): 109–36.

Halliday, M. A. K. and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 3rd ed. London: Arnold.

Harder, Peter (2012). 'Variation, structure and norms', *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 10(2): 294–314.

Hickey, Raymond (ed.) (2012). *Standards of English: Codified Varieties around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hyland, Ken (1996). 'Writing without conviction? Hedging in science research articles', *Applied Linguistics* 17(4): 433–54.
Hyland, Ken (1998). 'Boosting, hedging and the negotiation of academic knowledge', *Text* 18(3): 349–82.
Kachru, Braj B. (1985). 'Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle', in Randolph Quirk and H. G. Widdowson (eds.), *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 11–30.
Kachru, Braj B. (1986). *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native Englishes*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Kruger, Haidee (2017). 'A corpus-based study of the effects of editorial intervention: implications for the features of translated language', in Gert de Sutter, Isabelle Delaere and Marie-Aude Lefer (eds.), *Empirical Translation Studies: New Methodological and Theoretical Traditions*, TiLSM: Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, pp. 113–56.
Kruger, Haidee and Bertus van Rooy (2017). 'Editorial practice and the progressive in Black South African English', *World Englishes* 36(1): 20–41.
Kursa, Miron B. and Witold R. Rudnicki (2010). 'Feature selection with the Boruta Package', *Journal of Statistical Software* 36(11): 1–13, www.jstatsoft.org/v36/i11/ (last accessed 18 May 2019).
Labov, William (1972). *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Liaw, Andy and Matthew Wiener (2002). 'Classification and regression by randomForest', *R News* 2(3): 18–22.
Makalela, Leketi (2004). 'Making sense of BSAE for linguistic democracy in South Africa', *World Englishes* 23(3): 355–66.
Melchers, Gunnel and Philip Shaw (2013). *World Englishes: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
Mesthrie, Rajend (2004). 'Black South African English: morphology and syntax', in Bernd Kortmann, Edgar W. Schneider, Kate Burridge, Rajend Mesthrie and Clive Upton (eds.), *The Handbook of Varieties of English, Vol. 2: Morphology and Syntax*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 962–73.
Mesthrie, Rajend (2010). 'Socio-phonetics and social change: deracialisation of the GOOSE vowel in South African English', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 14(1): 3–33.
Mesthrie, Rajend, Alida Chevalier and Timothy Dunne (2015). 'A regional and social dialectology of the BATH vowel in South African English', *Language Variation and Change* 27(1): 1–30.
Milroy, James and Lesley Milroy (2012). *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*. London: Routledge.
Nini, Andrea (2014). *Multidimensional Analysis Tagger 1.1*, http://sites.google.com/site/multidimensionaltagger (last accessed 18 May 2019).

Palmer, F. R. (2001). *Mood and Modality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rossouw, Ronel and Bertus van Rooy (2012). 'Diachronic changes in modality in South African English', *English World-Wide* 33(1): 1–26.

Schneider, Edgar W. (2007). *Postcolonial English: Varieties around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Simon-Vandenbergen, Anne-Marie and Karin Aijmer (2007). *The Semantic Field of Modal Certainty: A Corpus-Based Study of English Adverbs*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Strobl, Carolin, Torsten Hothorn and Achim Zeileis (2009). 'Party on! A new, conditional variable-importance measure for random forests available in the party package', *The R Journal* 1(2): 14–17.

Strobl, Carolin, James Malley and Gerhard Tutz (2009). 'An introduction to recursive partitioning: rationale, application and characteristics of classification and regression trees, bagging and random forests', *Psychological Methods* 14(4): 323–48.

Tagliamonte, Sali A. and R. Harald Baayen (2012). 'Models, forests, and trees of York English: *was/were* variation as a case study for statistical practice', *Language Variation and Change* 24: 135–78.

Van Rooy, Bertus (2005). 'Expressions of modality in Black South African English', paper presented at the Corpus Linguistics Conference, Birmingham, 14–17 July 2005.

Van Rooy, Bertus (2011). 'A principled distinction between error and conventionalised innovation in African Englishes', in Joybrato Mukherjee and Marianne Hundt (eds.), *Exploring Second-Language Varieties of English and Learner Englishes: Bridging a Paradigm Gap*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 189–208.

Van Rooy, Bertus (2014). 'Convergence and endonormativity at Phase 4 of the Dynamic Model', in Sarah Buschfeld, Thomas Hoffmann, Magnus Huber and Alexander Kautzsch (eds.), *The Evolution of Englishes: The Dynamic Model and Beyond*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 21–38.

Van Rooy, Bertus and Haidee Kruger (2016). 'The innovative progressive aspect of Black South African English: the role of language proficiency and normative processes', *International Journal of Learner Corpus Research* 2(2): 205–28.

Van Rooy, Bertus and Lize Terblanche (2010). 'Complexity in word-formation processes in new varieties of South African English', *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 28(4): 357–74.

Van Rooy, Bertus and Ronel Wasserman (2014). 'Do the modals of black and white South African English converge?' *Journal of English Linguistics* 42(1): 51–67.

Wasserman, Ronel and Bertus van Rooy (2014). 'The development of modals of obligation and necessity in White South African English through contact with Afrikaans', *Journal of English Linguistics* 42(1): 31–50.

Wilmot, Kirstin (2014). '"Coconuts" and the middle-class: identity change and the emergence of a new prestigious English variety in South Africa', *English World-Wide* 35(3): 306–37.

APPENDIX 1

Feature List and Abbreviations

AMP – Amplifiers
ANDC – Independent clause coordination with *and*
AWL – Average word length
BEMA – *Be* as main verb
BYPA – *By*-passives
CAUS – Causative adverbial subordinators
CONC – Concessive adverbial subordinators
COND – Conditional adverbial subordinators
CONJ – Conjuncts
CONT – Contractions
DEMO – Demonstratives
DEMP – Demonstrative pronouns
DPAR – Discourse particles
DWNT – Downtoners
EMPH – Emphatics
EX – Existential *there*
FPP – First-person pronouns
GER – Gerunds
HDG – Hedges
INPR – Indefinite pronouns
JJ – Attributive adjectives
NEMD – Necessity modals
NN – Total other nouns
NOMZ – Nominalisations
OSUB – Other adverbial subordinators
PASS – Agentless passives
PASTP – Past participial clauses
PEAS – Perfect aspect
PHC – Phrasal coordination

PIN – Total prepositional phrases
PIRE – Pied-piping relative clauses
PIT – Pronoun *it*
PLACE – Place adverbials
POMD – Possibility modals
PRED – Predicative adjectives
PRESP – Present participial clauses
PRIV – Private verbs
PRMD – Predictive modals
PROD – Pro-verb *do*
PUBV – Public verbs
RB – Total adverbs
SERE – Sentence relatives
SMP – *seem/appear*
SPAU – Split auxiliaries
SPIN – Split infinitives
SPP – Second person pronouns
STPR – Stranded prepositions
SUAV – Suasive verbs
SYNE – Synthetic negation
THAC – *that* adjective complements
THATD – Subordinator *that* deletion
THVC – *that* verb complements
TIME – Time adverbials
TO – Infinitives
TOBJ – *that* relative clauses on object position
TPP – Third-person pronouns
TSUB – *that* relative clauses on subject position
TTR – Type–token ratio
VBD – Past-tense verbs
VPRT – Present-tense verbs
WHCL – WH-clauses
WHOBJ – WH relative clauses on object position
WHQU – Direct WH-questions
WHSUB – WH relative clauses on subject position
WZPAST – Past participial WHIZ deletion relatives
WZPRES – Present participial WHIZ deletion relatives
XXo – Analytic negation