

# Discourse-Pragmatic Borrowing in South African English

**Foluke Unuabonah**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0531-1962>  
Redeemer's University, Ede, Nigeria  
unuabonahf@run.edu.ng

**Mampoi Mabena**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1651-0833>  
University of Johannesburg,  
South Africa

## Abstract

This paper explores five borrowed discourse-pragmatic features—*wena*, *mna/mina*, *yazi*, *phela*, and *ke*—which are transferred from indigenous South African languages into South African English, with the objective of investigating their frequency, position, collocational patterns, and discourse-pragmatic functions. The data, which are taken from the South African component of the Global Web-based English corpus, are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, from a postcolonial corpus pragmatic framework. The results show that the discourse-pragmatic features are generally infrequent, orthographically stable, and prefer the clause-initial position. The paper indicates that *wena* is used as an address term to call for the addressee's attention, *mna/mina* is used to emphasise personal identity, while *yazi* seeks confirmation of and signals shared knowledge. *Phela* is an emphasis marker, while *ke* indicates contrast, textual coherence, and emphasis. This study underscores the contributions of indigenous South African languages to the discourse-pragmatic features of South African English.

**Keywords:** corpus pragmatics; discourse-pragmatic features; postcolonial pragmatics; pragmatic borrowing; South African English

## 1. Introduction

English is one of the 12 official languages in South Africa, and the fifth biggest home language, preceded by Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, and Pedi, based on the 2023 South African census. Thus, many South Africans, particularly those living in urban areas with African languages as their home languages, are highly multilingual and can speak an average of four to five languages (Botha, Van Rooy, and Coetzee-van Rooy 2021a). English was introduced into South Africa through migration and colonisation in the nineteenth century. This occurred in three different phases: the first group arrived in the early nineteenth century and settled in the Eastern Cape, the second group arrived around the middle of the nineteenth century and settled in Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal), while the last group arrived towards the end of the nineteenth century and settled in present-day Johannesburg (Botha, Van Rooy, and Coetzee-van Rooy 2021a).

English was the official language of the colony since the early nineteenth century. In 1910, Dutch became an official language, alongside English, while in 1925, Afrikaans also became an official language. In 1948, English and Afrikaans were the only two official national languages while indigenous languages were regional languages in the different Black communities (Giliomee 1997). By 1994, which marked the end of apartheid, nine languages—Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu—joined English and Afrikaans as official languages, while South African Sign Language became an official language in July 2023. The implication is that English coexists with different languages and cultures in South Africa, which have influenced its use over the years. This situation has led to the existence of distinct varieties of South African English (SAfE), including Black South African English, Cape Flats English, Indian South African English, and White South African English. The different varieties are regarded as first language (L1) varieties of English, except Black South African English, which is a second language (L2) variety that is influenced by different indigenous South African languages such as Xhosa and Zulu. These different L1 and L2 varieties have unique characteristics; however, they also share similar features (Bowerman 2012; Finn 2004; Mesthrie 2012a, 2012b). Based on Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model, it is generally claimed that SAfE is at the nativisation stage (the third stage), which is the most active stage that starts from political liberation and involves lexical growth and dynamic grammatical forms owing to increased interaction between English and the local languages. However, SAfE is also displaying strong evidence of moving into endonormative stabilisation (the fourth stage), which captures the recognition of local forms, the inclusion of literary creativity and codification (Bekker 2019; Collins 2022; Schneider 2007).

There are a number of studies on SAfE varieties at the levels of phonology (Bekker and Van Rooy 2015; Bowerman 2008), lexico-semantics (Silva 1997; Wasserman 2019), morphosyntax (Mohr 2017; Van Rooy 2014), and sociolinguistics (Brookes 2019; Coetzee-van Rooy 2021). Studies that investigate discourse-pragmatic attributes of SAfE are rare, as evidenced in the recent bibliography compiled by Botha, Van Rooy,

and Coetzee-van Rooy (2021b). The few discourse-pragmatic studies examine pragmatic markers (PMs) (De Klerk, 2005a; Huddleston and Fairhurst 2013), speech acts (Kasanga 2006; Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu 2007), and politeness strategies (Bharuthram 2003; Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu 2007). For example, De Klerk (2005a, 2005b) explores English PMs *actually* and *well*, while Jeffery and Van Rooy (2004) and Huddleston and Fairhurst (2013) explore English PMs that have distinct South African usages such as *now* and *shame*, respectively. However, studies that focus on discourse-pragmatic features (DPFs) that are borrowed from indigenous South African languages into SAfE are scarce (De Klerk 2006; Unuabonah 2022; Unuabonah and Mtembu 2023). For example, Unuabonah (2022) investigates five DPFs that are borrowed from Afrikaans into SAfE, without exploring DPFs borrowed from other indigenous South African languages into SAfE. Although Unuabonah and Mtembu (2023) examine DPFs that are transferred from languages such as Xhosa and Zulu into SAfE, these are limited to PMs such as *nje*, *mara*, *kanti*, *vele*, and *kaloku*, excluding other DPFs such as *wena* and *phela*. Apart from *wena* which is identified as a pronoun in the Dictionary of South African English (DSAE 2020), the others do not appear in the dictionary at all. De Klerk (2006) only makes a few observations about the functions of *wena* and *mna/mina* without investigating their formal attributes. This leads to limited information and understanding of borrowed DPFs in SAfE.

Hence, this paper extends the research on DPFs in SAfE by carrying out a systematic and comprehensive analysis of five borrowed DPFs—*wena*, *mna*, *yazi*, *ke*, and *phela*—in the South African section of the corpus of Global Web-based English (GloWbE) (Davies 2013; <https://www.english-corpora.org/glowbe/>), using corpus-based methods. This article contributes to the research on the influence of indigenous South African languages on South African English at the discourse-pragmatic level. The borrowed DPFs were selected since they had not been given adequate attention in the literature. Although it is expected that these borrowed DPFs are likely to occur more in Black South African English than any other SAfE variety, the South African component of GloWbE includes the English language usage of different South Africans, irrespective of the varieties they use. Examples showing the use of these South African DPFs in the South African component of GloWbE (GloWbE-SA) are listed in (1) to (5):

- (1) # The Minister sighs heavily: “Eish **wena**, you know I’m very busy, I don’t know the boy (GloWbE-SA 172)
- (2) # solomon what am I dreaming about. **Mna** I would never get married if my guy does nt want to pay lobola (GloWbE-SA 7)
- (3) # Shem Choppalisto... i felt for him **yazi**. # Dinny... first it was his horrible hairstyles (GloWbE-SA 26)
- (4) # BUT **ke** its Not Tuesday as Kusi suggested! So its ALL Hastings idea # (GloWbE-SA 48)

- (5) C'm on Killer, **phela** that dude is your football father we all know that (GloWbE-SA 18)

To achieve its purpose, this study had the following objectives:

- (i) to examine the frequency, spelling stability, syntactic position, and distribution of *wena*, *mna*, *yazi*, *ke*, and *phela* in SAfE; and
- (ii) to investigate the collocational patterning and discourse-pragmatic roles of the five DPFs in SAfE.

This section provided the background to the study and explained its purpose and research objectives. Section 2 discusses DPFs within a postcolonial corpus pragmatic framework, while Section 3 addresses the data and research methodology. Section 4 presents the results, while section 5 discusses the findings. Section 6 concludes the article.

## 2. Theoretical Considerations

“Discourse-pragmatic features” is an umbrella term that covers a range of linguistic items which perform different interpersonal functions such as signalling affective, epistemic, and attitudinal meanings or textual functions such as marking discourse initiation, termination, or interruption (Brinton 1996; Pichler 2016, 3). These include features such as PMs (e.g., *obviously*, *you know*), interjections (e.g., *eh*, *wow*), general extenders (e.g., *or whatever*, *and everything*), quotatives (e.g., *say*, *think*), vocatives (e.g., *darling*, *baby*), and intensifiers (e.g., *totally*, *well*) (Pichler 2016, 4). DPFs have been studied from different theoretical perspectives such as discourse-coherence (Lenk 1998; Schiffrin 1987), grammatical-pragmatic (Brinton 1996; Fraser 1996), cognitive-pragmatic (Blakemore 2002), and variational pragmatic (Aijmer 2013) approaches. In this article, DPFs are explored from a postcolonial corpus pragmatic approach that combines the tenets of postcolonial pragmatics and corpus pragmatics. On the one hand, postcolonial pragmatics investigates pragmatic features that have been influenced by the transfer of indigenous cultures and linguistic aspects of postcolonial speech communities to a specific European language and vice versa (Anchimbe 2018; Anchimbe and Janney 2011). The DPFs studied in this article are DPFs borrowed from indigenous South African languages such as Xhosa and Zulu into English, a European language, as a result of the colonisation of South Africa by the British in the past. On the other hand, corpus pragmatics involves the investigation of different pragmatic features, such as PMs and interjections using computer corpora. Such an examination involves both horizontal (qualitative) and vertical (quantitative) analysis (Rühlemann and Aijmer 2015). To achieve its aim, this article also utilises Andersen’s (2014) notion of pragmatic borrowing that focuses on the process and results of borrowing discourse-pragmatic features such as PMs, interjections, expletives and tags from a source language into a recipient language. Such an approach pays attention to spelling

adaptation, scope, collocations, positions, distribution, semantic stability, and pragmatic multifunctionality of discourse-pragmatic features (Balteiro 2018). The notion of pragmatic borrowing is therefore relevant to the present study, as this study pays detailed attention to the forms and functions of loaned DPFs in SAfE.

This study also relies on Matras's (2000) theory of Fusion, which is based on the idea that there is the non-separation of two language systems for bilingual speakers. The theory is a function-based and cognitive model, which suggests that in certain situations, bilingual speakers unconsciously try to reduce the mental processing effort that is required in monitoring and directing utterances, particularly when dealing with a pragmatically dominant language, by using linguistic options such as borrowed DPFs which require less mental processing effort. Such situations are usually informal ones like online informal interactions such as blogs and discussion forums since users are relaxed and do not have the need to apply maximum mental effort. As Matras (2000) opines, the continuous use of these borrowed DPFs may lead to language change, as is the case with SAfE where the use of these borrowed DPFs differentiates SAfE from other varieties of English.

Borrowed DPFs have been explored in a small number of African varieties of English such as *kale* and *mbu* in Ugandan English (Isingoma 2016), *tweaa* in Ghanaian English (Thompson 2019), and *tufia* and *eya* in Nigerian English (Honkanen 2022). Others include *ati* and *sasa* in Tanzanian English (Unuabonah and Muro 2022) and *kumbe* and *kweli* in Kenyan English (Muro and Unuabonah 2022). These studies have revealed that these DPFs are one of the distinctive attributes of African varieties of English (Isingoma 2016; Unuabonah 2022). Moreover, these DPFs are useful in projecting a shared ethnic or national identity, signalling informality, reaffirming solidarity, and signalling engagement (Amuzu, Kuwornu, and Opoku-Fofie 2018; De Klerk 2006; Honkanen 2020). Scholars also posit that DPFs in East African English varieties seem to perform both textual and interpersonal functions (Isingoma 2016; Unuabonah and Muro 2022), while most DPFs in West African varieties tend to perform more interpersonal functions (Amuzu, Kuwornu, and Opoku-Fofie 2018). Furthermore, while most DPFs in East African English varieties tend to appear in clause-initial positions, most DPFs in West African varieties tend to occur in clause-final positions, which may be related to the positions and functions of the DPFs in their source languages. Hence, it is imperative to also explore loaned DPFs in SAfE to account for their frequency, syntactic position, distribution across clause types, collocational patterns, and discourse-pragmatic roles.

### 3. Data and Methodology

The data for the study include utterances that involve five DPFs—*wena*, *mna*, *yazi*, *ke*, and *phela*—which are transferred from indigenous South African languages into SAfE. The five DPFs were chosen because they had not been systematically studied in the literature. The data were extracted from GloWbE-SA, which comprises 45 364 498 words, collected from different South African websites and pages, such as discussion

forums, blogs, and online newspapers (Davies 2013). GloWbE itself comprises 1.9 billion words of online texts produced in 20 countries where English is spoken as a first or second language (Davies 2013). GloWbE-SA contains naturally occurring written online utterances produced by actual users of the variety. GloWbE-SA was chosen because it includes the English language usage of different South Africans regardless of the SAfE varieties they use. While there are other SAfE corpora, these only contain Xhosa English (De Klerk 2006) or mainly White South African English (Jeffery 2003). The DPFs were chosen because they appeared at least 20 times in the corpus as DPFs. Moreover, apart from *wena*, none of the remaining DPFs appears in the Dictionary of South African English. Although it is possible that citizens of a country can contribute to the websites of other countries (Mukherjee 2015; Nelson 2015), the frequency of the DPFs in the South African section and the absence of the DPFs in other sections of GloWbE indicate that the DPFs are peculiar to the South African section.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in the analysis of the data. An asterisk was added to the five DPFs (e.g., *wena*\*, *yaz*\*<sup>1</sup>) and these were searched for in GloWbE to retrieve variants that may appear in the online corpus. The full form of *yazi* (*uyazi*) was also included in the search. GloWbE was searched using the analysis software on its website (<https://www.english-corpora.org/glowbe/>). The retrieved data were manually searched in order to exclude instances where some of the DPFs occurred in indigenous South African languages, as exemplified in (6). Other eliminated utterances include instances where the DPFs were repeated, as in (7), where they referred to the name of a place (8), and tokens where the DPFs perform metalinguistic functions (9):

- (6) Hei wena, ho etsahalang ka **wena**, maar? You know, we have representatives like you (GloWbE-SA 101)
- (7) they wanted my grannies measurements, **wena** height **wena** eye colour, alles!! if my mom is left or right (GloWbE 46)
- (8) # Our intention was to stay in **Mina** for at least five waqts (times of prayer). (GloWbE-SA 100).
- (9) The negative of this form is created by replacing the **ke** with ha se (GloWbE 136)

After the manual search, there was a raw count of the remaining instances of the DPFs, after which the relative frequencies were calculated based on a rate of per million words (pmw). The syntactic position, collocational patterns, distribution of the borrowed DPFs across clause types, and discourse-pragmatic functions of the borrowed DPFs in the texts were examined and the different features were counted.

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1 *Yaz* instead of *yazi* was used for the extraction so as not to exclude *yaz*, which is the shortened form of *yazi*.

## 4. Results

Based on our exploration of GloWbE, *wena* (N = 95; 2.1 pmw) had the highest frequency, followed by *mna/mina* (N = 81; 1.8 pmw), *yazi* (N = 70; 1.5 pmw), *phela* (N = 49; 1.1 pmw) and *ke* (N = 37; 0.8 pmw). In the following sub-sections, we describe each of the DPFs in detail.

### 4.1 *Wena* in SAfE

*Wena* is the Xhosa, Zulu, and Sotho word for the pronoun *you*, but which can be used as a DPF (De Klerk 2006, 610). It is used as an address term to emphasise the addressee's identity, and call the addressee's attention to the importance of what is being uttered. Hence, in the utterances, it is syntactically optional. *Wena* appears more frequently in clause-initial (N = 74) than in clause-final (N = 21) position, as cited in (10) and (11), respectively. *Wena* also occurs more often with declaratives (N = 50) than with interrogatives (N = 19) and imperatives (N = 17), as shown in (10), (11), and (12), respectively:

- (10) Khosi is bound to be read by many!!!!!! # **Wena** Tshepo, your legs are finished, you must get BLADES like Oscar Pistorius. (GloWbE 60)
- (11) # Ayashah... do you work **wena**... seems like all you do is sit infront of the computer (GloWbE 118)
- (12) They just choose that this one is for comrade so and so and **wena**, wait, your turn will come. GloWbE 67)

*Wena* collocates very often with other DPFs as it co-occurs with them in 69 instances (72.6%). Some of these DPFs include other borrowed PMs such as *nje*, address terms such as the proper noun, *Baxter*, and borrowed interjections such as *eish*, as seen in (13), (14), and (15), respectively.

- (13) All you need is love *nje qha wena*! # You think making noise and barking here is gon na change anything it (GloWbE 38)
- (14) # And **Wena** Baxter, your players lack discipline..... Yeye got his yellow card deliberately (GloWbE 58)
- (15) We bonded a lot. # KUKU - *eish wena* mara the more he called me “ lala ” was the more he push it (GloWbE 71)
- (16) her daughter was taking treatment. just because **wena** you have a stronger immune system, it does nt mean that those who pass (GloWbE 174)

On some occasions, as depicted in (16), *wena* co-occurs with the pronoun *you*, which further shows the optionality of *wena*.

As stated earlier, *wena* is used to emphasise the addressee's identity or to single out the addressee, which coincides with its function in the local South African languages, as indicated in (10), where it occurs with the name *Tshepo*, or (14), where it co-occurs with *Baxter*. In addition, it is used to draw the addressee's attention to the message that is being passed across. Thus, in (16) the addresser uses *wena* to call the addressee's attention to the fact that not everyone has as strong an immune system as them.

#### 4.2 *Mna/Mina* in SAfE

*Mna* from Xhosa and *mina* from Zulu (henceforth *m(i)na*) are similar to the English pronoun "me." Like *wena*, *m(i)na* is syntactically optional and is used to signal the opinion of the addresser or emphasise the personal identity of the addresser (De Klerk 2006, 610). *Mina* appears 42 times while *mna* appears 39 times in GloWbE-SA, as depicted in (17) and (18), respectively. *M(i)na* appears more frequently in clause-initial (N = 73) and hardly in clause-final (N = 6) and clause-medial (N = 2) positions, as shown in (17), (18), and (19), respectively. *M(i)na* also appears mainly with declaratives (N = 80) than with interrogatives (N = 1), as exemplified in (19) and (20), respectively:

- (17) OhSoStunning on Tue, 23rd Oct 2012 10:34 am # **Mina**, 'm a fashion kind of girl but i like doing my own (GloWbE 29)
- (18) I am battling to keep order here **mna**. If I am going to get married, my marriage package comes with a (GloWbE 23)
- (19) # The dress code was Black Tie which I call Red Carpet **mna** to avoid further explanations. The invite stated:' Please note (GloWbE 16)
- (20) We not working mos, maybe a babyshower is not a bad idea bt **mna** ke why do I hv to contribute finacially? I didnt plan the shower mos (GloWbE 12)

*M(i)na* does not collocate often with other DPFs, as it appears with other DPFs in only 34 instances (42%). Examples include borrowed PMs such as *ke*, borrowed interjections such as *hayi*, and English PMs such as *well*, as exemplified in (20), (21), and (22), respectively:

- (21) # Hayi but **mina** i don't balme celbs for telling some followers crap, jeer (GloWbE 23)
- (22) # LolHunt so having a helper makes one isinyemfu? Well **mna** im one of those that u will never find ma house dirty (GloWbE 21)

Apart from other DPFs, *m(i)na* sometimes co-occurs with the pronoun "I" as shown in (21) and (22), which further shows the optionality of *m(i)na* in the utterances.



As noted earlier, *m(i)na* generally signals that the opinion put forth belongs to the addresser and no one else. This opinion may or may not contradict others' opinions, depending on the situation. For example, in (17), the addressee uses *mina* to signal her personal identity as a fashion person and indicate that her opinion belongs to her. In (23), the addressee uses *mna* to signal her own opinion, where she states that she does not see anything wrong in copying the style of the musician Beyonce; this is contrary to the opinions of other interactants who feel it is wrong to do so.

- (23) you copy another copycat # FrozenBubblez on Tue, 20th Nov 2012 7:46 am  
# **Mna** I don't see anything wrong with coping beyonce's outfit shem... (GloWbE 11)

### 4.3 *Yazi* in SAfE

*Yazi* is an adaptation of *uyazi* which means “you know” and is derived from the verb stem *azi* (know) in Xhosa and Zulu (Dent and Nyembezi 1992). This indicates that it is used to signal or seek confirmation of shared knowledge. *Yazi* appears as *yazi* (N = 48), *yaz* (N = 18), *uyazi* (N = 2), and *yazz* (N = 2) in the South African component of GloWbE, as seen in (24), (25), (26), and (27), respectively. *Yazi* appears more regularly in clause-final (N = 45) than in clause-initial (N = 21) positions, as shown in (24) and (25), respectively. It also appears more with declaratives (N = 69) than with interrogatives (N = 1), as cited in (27) and (28), respectively:

- (24) # stars I thought the same thing **yazi**, anyways whatever their names are I also prefer the one on the 1st pic (GloWbE 20)
- (25) declared not fit and proper to practise as an attorney in south africa. # **yaz** i am bored, my head is aching. (GloWbE 10)
- (26) # These feelings called love are complicated **uyazi**! i feel sorry for Noluntu cos you don't choose (GloWbE 2)
- (27) # morngin ma bloggers amahle # missed you **yazz** ol of you # owu your friends shame ayash and Zdwesha what i can say (GloWbE 1)
- (28) why i was saying Richmond is so sweet, he came with a bday gift **yazi**? the rest of us blacks just brought our thirsty hungry selves. (GloWbE 39)

*Yazi* rarely co-occurs with other DPFs; it appears with them in only eight instances (11.4%). The few DPFs it collocates with include borrowed interjections such as *hayibo*, borrowed PMs such as *nje*, and address terms such as *guys*, as depicted in (29), (30), and (31), respectively:

- (29) Not even abandoning your child can change that!!! # hayibo, **uyazi** wena VusiK..... lol there are some men who also value marriage (GloWbE-SA 2)

(30) eiy that one, she is crazy **yaz** nje # hi Bomyy welcom back Manicure i have'nt forgot (GloWbE 15)

(31) She stans for her man! # Guys **yazi** the way Monei is sweet here on JC and always posting izinto ezipositive? (GloWbE 38)

*Yazi*, like the English equivalent *you know* (Beeching 2016), is multifunctional as it can be used to seek confirmation of and signal shared knowledge, call addressee's attention, and emphasise the message in an utterance. Cases where *yazi* is used to seek confirmation of shared knowledge are depicted in (32) and (33):

(32) # my AG is ment that are verbal abusers.. **yazi** that thing hurts so much. living with a man that is so verbally abusive (GloWbE-SA 14)

(33) then browse the rest of the paper. # I should change my attitude **yazi**. esp if i'm gona be the entrepreneur (GloWbE-SA 1)

In (32), the writer uses *yazi* to seek confirmation of the shared knowledge that living with a verbally abusive man hurts a lot, and in (33), the writer uses *yazi* to seek confirmation of the shared knowledge that it is important for the writer to change their attitude if they would become an entrepreneur.

*Yazi* can be used to signal shared background knowledge, as depicted in (34) and (35):

(34) all im saying is stop expecting rather wait to be told, **yaz** there are people who work 24 hours as professional as they are. (GloWbE 3)

(35) the que is long! Lol... Ayanda uright nana? God loves you **yaz**! One day God will bless you with ubuthongo uzolala ebusuku (GloWbE 7)

In (34), the writer uses *yazi* to signal shared knowledge between them and their addressee that there are professionals who work for 24 hours. In (35), the writer uses *yazi* to indicate that it is shared knowledge that God loves the addressee.

*Yazi* may also be used to call the addressee's attention to the message in an utterance, as seen in (36) and (37):

(36) wait till you see my pics then you can say UGLY. # **Yaz** i even got a chance to speak to celebrities like we family members. (GloWbE 66)

(37) # i feel sorry for gita too **yazi**, finaly we saw Thandeka (charmaine'schef) i love the wedding the brides maid (GloWbE 28)

In (36), the writer uses *yazi* to call the addressee's attention to the fact that the writer had the chance to speak with celebrities, and in (37), the writer uses *yazi* to call the addressee's attention to the fact that the writer feels sorry for Gita.

On rare occasions, *yazi* can be also used to emphasise the message in an utterance, as shown in (38) and (39):

- (38) Thabiso Mokgosi) will be faced with legal actions. # Yhoooooo this is bad **yazi** at sum point I thot I had prblms but nah ths is one hell of (GloWbE 1)
- (39) # PreciousPearl nam **Yaz!** Beautiful piece Zamani In that' know-it-all' section you forgot to mention Sizwe (GloWbE 5)

In (38), the writer uses *yazi* to emphasise the evaluation that the situation involving Thabiso Mokgosi is a bad one. In this case, the evaluation is one that is likely shared with the addressee. In (39), *yaz(i)* is used to emphasise the evaluation that the post of the addressee is a very beautiful one.

#### 4.4. *Phela* in SAfE

*Phela*, which is borrowed from *phela* in Zulu, can be termed an emphatic marker, which shares similar meanings with other English emphatic markers such as *truly* and *indeed* (Dent and Nyembezi 1992). *Phela* occurs at clause-initial (N = 44) and clause-final (N = 5) positions, as exemplified in (40) and (41), respectively. It appears mostly in clause-initial position. *Phela* occurs more frequently with declaratives (N = 47) than with imperatives (N = 1) and interrogatives (N = 1), as illustrated in (40), (41), and (42), respectively:

- (40) Can we plz re-enter for the weekend away giveaway? **Phela** that other site was just impossible. I need that weekend yazi. # (GloWbE 7)
- (41) # keep the tips on marriage rolling **phela** hau! # Manicure, welcome back gal, we missed you! # (GloWbE 66)
- (42) Noluntu does nt want to become an unknown person, **phela** who is Moeletsu kanene??? (GloWbE 32)

*Phela* rarely collocates with other DPFs; it occurs with them at 16.3% of the total number of instances in the corpus. The few it co-occurs with include borrowed interjections such as *hau*, borrowed PMs such as *mina*, English PMs such as *but*, and address terms such as *Caro*, as depicted in (41), (43), (44), and (45), respectively:

- (43) # Death!!! Im not a psycho **phela** mina # Ntombiyomzulu on Fri, 23rd Nov 2012 3:32 pm # (GloWbE 10)

- (44) # Kiki i did say hello, but **phela** nawe you were hot property being pulled left, right and centre! (GloWbE 53)
- (45) # WA TSWAFA GAKERE... means you being lazy... # caro, **phela** OKAPI is in between a TABLE KNIFE and a PANGA..... (GloWbE 40)

In most of these contexts, *phela* is used to emphasise the truth contained in the utterances. For example, in (43), the writer uses *phela* to emphasise that they are not a psycho, and in (45), the writer uses *phela* to emphasise that the addressee was distracted by many people, and therefore did not know when the writer said *hello*.

On rare occasions, *phela* can be used to indicate a contrast between two adjoining clauses, as seen in (46) and (47):

- (46) # I wish all cases could be dealt like this..... **Phela** if it was some1 else this case would def have not gone this far.... (GloWbE 23)
- (47) # hayibo, VusiK, **phela** you said men will not tell the ladies how they really feel, they'd rather tell fellow men, (GloWbE 31)

In (46), the writer uses *phela* to indicate what other people would do, which would be different or in contrast to the current situation. In (47), the writer uses *phela* to indicate a contrast between what the addressee had said about men (not telling ladies how they feel) and what men would actually do (tell fellow men how they feel).

#### 4.5 *Ke* in SAfE

*Ke* is also borrowed from Xhosa; it shares similar meanings with different English PMs such as *then*, *and*, and *but* (Masinyana 2013), which points to the multifunctional nature of *ke*, as discussed later in this sub-section. *Ke* appears more frequently in clause-initial (N = 21) than clause-final (N = 14) and clause-medial (N = 2) positions, as cited in (48), (49), and (50), respectively. It also appears more recurrently with declaratives (N = 30) than with interrogatives (N = 5) and imperatives (N = 2), as depicted in (50), (51), and (52), respectively:

- (48) # BUT **ke** its Not Tuesday as Kusi suggested! So its ALL Hastings idea # (GloWbE 48)
- (49) # Wena you'd have to deal with Zamani's posts **ke**. He will keep on posting (GloWbE 61)
- (50) # Kerrie I am living you incharge **ke** to keep the fire burning you are doing a very good here (GloWbE 203)

- (51) and eventually master passing through..... # hayi **ke** mangqezu, you don't even gon na give it a try? (GloWbE 175)
- (52) then relocate with her to the rural areas with Sarah **ke** because she can't be left behind (GloWbE 204)

*Ke* collocates fairly often with other DPFs as it co-occurs with them in 55.3% of cases of the total number of *ke* in the data. It co-occurs with the borrowed interjection *hayi* (*no*), borrowed PM *ngoku* (*now*), and the English PM *but*, as shown in (51), (53), and (54):

- (53) # People are gon na laugh at you **ke** ngoku because there so many people here who know me and I have very short (GloWbE 72)

Masinyana (2013) investigates *ke* in Xhosa utterances and notes that *ke* typically co-occurs with certain DPFs such as *ngoku*, *hayi* and *kanti* (*but*) in Xhosa.

*Ke* is multifunctional as it is used to indicate contrast, textual coherence, and emphasis. As shown in (54) and (55), *ke* is used to show contrast between two adjoining discourse segments, and in this case, it co-occurs with contrastive markers such as *but* and *kanti* as shown in (54) and (55). In the data, *ke* collocates with *but* seven times and twice with *kanti*. These DPFs that co-occur with *ke* influence the function of *ke* as a contrastive marker.

- (54) She had said she was gon na change it **but ke** with the party around the corner it's hectic for her. (GloWbE 96)
- (55) # That psycho won't reveal its face at the party.... kanti **ke** I wish you would ayanda2 yazi! Shim promised to be here on Friday (GloWbE 85)

In (54), the writer uses *ke* to indicate a contrast between what the lady in question planned to do or change that requires a bit of time and the possible hindrances (party being near) to the plan. Similarly, in (55) the writer uses *ke* to contrast the earlier statement with the one that follows. The writer indicates that a particular person (who is "psycho") will not attend the party; contrary to this, they wish another person called Ayanda could attend the party instead. The writer uses *ke* to show a contrast between who is not attending the party and who should attend.

*Ke* is also used to provide textual coherence, as exemplified in (56) and (57):

- (56) all she does is drink, party sleep around. she even did a last number **ke** sending a 6 year old to a boarding school and the kid cries every Sunday (GloWbE 98)
- (57) But he's not convinced, I've tried and tried... worse **ke** yena he doesn't even like to party. (GloWbE 232)

In (56), the writer uses *ke* to create textual coherence between her utterances. In this case, *ke* is used to show that sending a six-year-old to a boarding school is an illustration of the last act of a lady who appears to be an irresponsible mother in addition to her preceding acts. In (57), the writer uses *ke* to create textual coherence between the fact that the man in question does not like to party despite the fact that the writer had tried to convince him to attend a party.

*Ke* can also be used to emphasise the message in an utterance, as cited in (58) and (59):

(58) can u fail to love ur own child, kanjani dat I will never undurstand **ke** mina. #  
(GloWbE 102)

(59) everyone is excited that Kimberly, Barker and Cherel are back. So listen here **ke**...  
did it ever occur to you that maybe we love our Gen flat and (GloWbE 255)

In (58), the writer uses *ke* to emphasise the fact that she does not understand how someone could not love their child, and in (59), the writer uses *ke* to emphasise that the reader should pay attention to the writer's words.

## 5. Discussion

This paper set out to examine the frequency, position, spelling stability, collocational patterns, and discourse-pragmatic functions of five DPFs: *wena*, *m(i)na*, *yazi*, *phela*, and *ke* in SAfE. The following sub-sections discuss the effects of the results on SAfE and other African varieties of English.

### 5.1 Frequency, Position, and Spelling Stability of the DPFs in SAfE

The DPFs are largely rare when compared with the frequency of their English counterparts in GloWbE-SA.<sup>2</sup> However, the low frequency of these borrowed DPFs may be limited to computer-based communication; they might be extremely frequent in spoken informal conversations (Unuabonah, Oyebola, and Gut 2021). Typically, in English, *you* and *me* are used only as pronouns and not as DPFs. Nevertheless, the findings revealed that of the five DPFs studied in this paper, *wena* is the most frequent DPF, followed by *m(i)na*. The frequency of *wena* may be because of its occurrence in many South African home languages such as Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Sotho, and Tswana which are among the most common home languages in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2023). Interestingly, *you*, which is typically a pronoun in English, occurs more than the English equivalents of the other borrowed DPFs studied in this article. It appears then that *wena*'s function as an address term that calls the attention of the readers may have influenced its frequency, especially as it is used to engage the

2 The raw count of the English equivalents of the borrowed DPFs in the South African section of GloWbE are *you* (396 758), *me* (67 476), *you know* (6704), *indeed* (5503), *truly* (4465), *but* (171 606), and *then* (58 191).

addressees. In addition, *wena* collocates easily with other DPFs and this may have influenced its relative frequency compared with the other four. This is also applicable to SAfE DPFs that occur more than the others, such as *nje* and *mara* (Unuabonah and Mtembu 2023). The frequency of *m(i)na* and *yazi* may be attributed to their occurrence in both Xhosa and Zulu, which are the two biggest home languages in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2023). In terms of spelling stability, all the DPFs are orthographically stable except *yazi*, which developed from *uyazi*, and has overtaken the original spelling of the word in terms of frequency. The spelling stability of these DPFs may be because the source languages of the DPFs, which are official languages, are taught formally and have undergone standardisation processes (Deumert 2010). Thus, users are fully aware of how they are spelt. In the case of *yazi*, the DPF may have been Anglicised by the removal of <u>, which is a process that takes place in other African varieties of English (Unuabonah 2021). The Anglicisation process may have also led to variants such as *yaz*.

In terms of positioning, all the DPFs occur mostly at clause-initial position except *yazi* which occurs mostly at clause-final position. It appears that this positioning has to do with their functions (Unuabonah and Mtembu 2023). *Wena* is an address term used as an attention-getter, *phela* is used to emphasise the truth in an upcoming message, while *ke* is largely used to indicate contrast and textual coherence between adjoining discourse segments; thus, they are likely to appear at the beginning of a clause. *Yazi*, however, is used to seek confirmation of or signal shared knowledge, and the final position has been noted as a typical position for markers that seek confirmation or signal shared knowledge (Beeching 2016; Unuabonah 2021). In relation to the distribution of the DPFs across different clause types, the findings show that all the DPFs have a strong preference for occurring with declaratives. For example, *m(i)na* occurs with declaratives in 98.8% of all instances of *m(i)na* while *yazi* occurs with declaratives in 98.6% of all instances of *yazi* in the data. However, *wena* is slightly different as it occurs with declaratives in 52.6% of all instances of *wena*. This ability of *wena* to occur with different clause types may contribute to its relative high frequency compared with the frequency of other DPFs.

## 5.2 Collocational Forms and Discourse-Pragmatic Roles of the DPFs in SAfE

With regard to collocational patterns, the results show that *wena* and to some extent *ke* collocate frequently with other DPFs. This probably has to do with the functions of *wena* and *ke*. Since *wena* mainly draws the attention of the addressee to the upcoming message, the writer may likely use other DPFs that name the addressee or indicate the attitude of the writer to the upcoming message as seen in *wena*'s co-occurrence with *Baxter* and *eish* in the analysis. *Ke*, on the other hand, performs more textual functions; thus, the writers may also have the need to employ other DPFs that express their attitude towards the text or the addressee. Moreover, the co-occurrence of *ke* with certain kinds of DPFs such as *ngoku* and *hayi* in SAfE point to the behaviour of *ke* in Xhosa

(Masinyana 2013). Thus, both the DPF and its characteristic behaviour in the source language are transferred into the recipient language.

Regarding discourse-pragmatic functions, the results showed that almost all the DPFs studied in this article largely perform interpersonal functions such as seeking confirmation of shared knowledge, emphasising the truth, or drawing the attention of the addressee to an upcoming message. The exception is *ke*, which largely performs textual functions of indicating contrast or textual coherence. This confirms previous studies which found that most DPFs borrowed from indigenous languages into Asian and African varieties of English largely perform interpersonal functions (Lange 2009; Unuabonah 2021). Based on the findings for the current study, the use of these borrowed DPFs indicate that SAfE users are generally expressive and engaging in online interactions. This contradicts previous findings that some SAfE (Xhosa English) speakers may appear “less enthusiastic, less involved, and generally more muted in expressing themselves” (De Klerk 2005c, 94), because of their limited use of English intensifiers such as *really* and *truly*. *Really* and *truly* are linguistic items that perform some of the emphatic functions performed by *phela* and *ke*. The implication is that, in addition to English items, SAfE users employ borrowed DPFs such as *m(i)na* and *phela* which help them to express their attitudes towards the message and the addressee, and DPFs such as *wena* and *yazi* which are useful in engaging addressees.

## 6. Conclusion

This study examined the frequency, spelling patterns, syntactic position, syntactic distribution, collocational patterns, and discourse-pragmatic roles of five DPFs, *wena*, *mna*, *ke*, *yazi*, and *phela* in SAfE. The results showed that the DPFs are quite rare in computer-based communication, orthographically stable, and prefer clause-initial position. *Wena* is used as an address term to call the addressee’s attention, *mna* is used to emphasise personal identity, while *yazi* seeks confirmation of and signals shared knowledge. *Phela* is an emphasis marker while *ke* indicates contrast and textual coherence. Thus, this study underscores the contributions of indigenous South African languages to the discourse-pragmatic features of South African English, as these DPFs have contributed significantly to the peculiarity of SAfE. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that the DPFs should be added to the Dictionary of South African English, as these DPFs contribute to the distinctive nature of SAfE at the discourse-pragmatic level.

Pragmatic borrowing is inevitable, not only in South Africa, but in different parts of the world and across different languages and periods. It is not something that can be stopped. Hence, it is necessary to elucidate the different discourse-pragmatic items that are borrowed to enhance international communication. Moreover, such pragmatic borrowing reflects ethnic and national identities (De Klerk 2006). It also mirrors a postcolonial identity, where users in postcolonial communities utilise multiple resources in their utterances, rather than relying strictly on English. This study has only focused



on loaned DPFs which are largely pragmatic markers, thereby excluding other kinds of DPFs such as borrowed interjections which contribute to the distinctive nature of SAfE. In addition, this study has used data that did not capture the age, ethnicity, or gender of the SAfE users nor compared the pragmatic discourse-functions of these DPFs in SAfE with their functions in the original (African) languages. Thus, in future studies, scholars should explore the influence of the age, ethnicity, and gender of users on their use of loaned DPFs in SAfE. Further studies may also compare the pragmatic discourse-functions of these DPFs in SAfE with their functions in their source languages. Similar studies may be extended to other Southern African Englishes such as Botswana English and Zambian English.

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