

Foreword

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The papers in the special focus issues of the *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* (13.4 and 14.1) testify to the continuing significance of Afrikaans sociohistorical linguistics. Even before its official “birth,” recognition, and christening, Afrikaans had been the subject of debate, discussion, dissension, and adulation. Within linguistics, it has excited attention from Hesseling onward on account of the transformation of Dutch grammar evident in some facets of its structure and lexicon. The extent of the transformation and the participation of indigenous and enslaved people in the process have proved what my co-editor, Paul Roberge (1995:72), once called an “enduring crux” in sociohistorical linguistics. With the promotion (and consequent further politicization) of Afrikaans in the apartheid era (1948–1994), the issue of origins became an ideologically polarized one. It seemed to me in the 1980s and 1990s that linguists in South Africa, with a few exceptions, weren’t keeping pace with developments in creolistics; and, conversely, scholars versed in creolistics weren’t always paying attention to the full span of the data on the transformation of Dutch in South Africa. With the academic boycott of apartheid South Africa, there seemed little opportunity for full, free, and frank scholarly exchange.

In planning the first international conference of the Linguistics Society of Southern Africa (“Linguistics at the Millennium in Southern Africa,” University of Cape Town, January 12–14, 2000), it seemed natural to give South African and international scholars the space for a workshop that would enhance such scholarly exchange. It was gratifying to receive the support of scholars from outside South Africa, many of whom were making their official debuts at a Linguistics Society conference in South Africa: Hans den Besten (Amsterdam); Paul Roberge (Chapel Hill); Silvia Kouwenberg (Mona, Jamaica); John Holm (Coimbra); in addition there were papers from two young scholars originally from Europe—Ana Deumert and the late Carla Luijks—who had become firmly based in South Africa. From South Africa, Ernst Kotzé, who is well-known for investigating Afrikaans in the Malay

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community, read a paper. My attempts to draw in other local scholars who had made their mark in the area for an extended workshop drew blanks: Edith Raidt had just retired; August Cluver had moved out of academia; and Achmat Davids was ill (he has since passed away). Work commitments prevented other South African academics from offering papers; but I had primed a few to participate from the floor, and keep the chairperson, Victor Webb, busy.

This was one of the many fruitful workshops in a fruitful conference; many of us will not forget the first January of the new millennium. (As true linguists, we cheerfully followed popular consensus, rather than history and etymology, in accepting 2000 C.E. as part of the new rather than the old millennium.) I am delighted that the papers pertaining to Afrikaans sociohistorical linguistics are appearing in the *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* in an updated form that takes cognizance of the discussions and dissections of the workshop and after. I am particularly indebted to Paul Roberge, who was a focus speaker at the workshop, initiated the publishing process, and acted as senior editor for the two issues. I have no doubt that the five papers and the specially commissioned afterword by Fritz Ponelis will be staple reading in the field for some time.

REFERENCE

Roberge, Paul T. 1995. The formation of Afrikaans. Language and social history: Studies in South African sociolinguistics, ed. by Rajend Mesthrie, 68–88. Cape Town: David Philip.

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