

## DISCUSSION

### Caveats and Comments

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By way of wrapping up this two-part special issue, Focus on Afrikaans Sociohistorical Linguistics (*JGL* 13.4 and 14.1), I will touch on some of the significant issues raised by the contributors from my own, mainly dissident, point of view.

Deumert's paper is a philological study in the strictest sense of a fine-grained analysis of a text corpus. Though Deumert's multivariate textual analysis is far more sophisticated than that of her predecessors, her work forms part of a tradition in Afrikaans historical linguistics dating back to J. L. M. Franken, who (in the 1920s) was the first to seriously mine the lode of Cape archival material (Franken 1953). J. du P. Scholtz (1963), with the very able assistance of L. C. van Oordt and of Smuts (1943) continued Franken's endeavors on a much wider front, more systematically, and with much greater attention to detail, followed by a number of scholars, including Raidt (1968), Pfeiffer (1980) and Ueckermann (1987).

A methodological issue central to Deumert's argument is the speech-writing divide. Deumert takes the view (*JGL* 13.4:302, 305) that there is a much closer fit between speech and writing than assumed specifically by Scholtz. To be sure, Scholtz took the texts quite seriously, considering detailed textual analysis the empirical way out of what he regarded as the speculative impasse on the origin of Afrikaans brought on by the Hesselings-Bosman debate. This position of Scholtz is clearly encapsulated in his etymology of *hartebeeshuis* (Scholtz 1972:124–126) and his criticism of Nienaber's Khoi derivation of this word: Scholtz takes Nienaber to task for straying from the written records, which contain only instances of *hartebeeshuis* and not a single one of the Khoi forms that Nienaber bases his argument on. A radical skeptic on the value of texts Scholtz most definitely was not. Nevertheless, Scholtz took the texts with a liberal pinch of salt: in his view they reflected the spoken language indirectly.

Deumert makes an extremely bold move to transcend what she considers an invidious distinction between speech and writing in that her written corpus, spanning the period from 1880 to 1922, is well within the present generation's consciousness of spoken Afrikaans. The oldest generation that I and my contemporaries were in contact with was born in the 1880s. To cite a single instance, I had long conversations with and made several recordings of the speech of a woman born in 1886. Her speech was practically identical to that of her grandchildren (my contemporaries) and my own, minor lexical details aside. It contained not the slightest degree of what may be considered "Dutch" inflection. The crucial issue is whether the 136 individuals who produced Deumert's corpus really spoke the way that they wrote. I contend that they did not, that Scholtz and his associates are correct in assuming longstanding diglossia between *Hollands* ("Cape Vernacular Dutch," Afrikaans) and *Hooghollands* (formal Dutch), and that even an extremely sophisticated textual analysis has no predictive value beyond the narrow confines of Deumert's corpus. The individuals who produced Deumert's corpus had complex verbal repertoires comprising varieties of formal Dutch as a written code and Afrikaans as a spoken code. The variation in her corpus pertains to the written code and is discontinuous with the spoken code.

Holm's paper has a dual aim (*JGL* 13.4:354): to justify *semicreole* as a typological category and to demonstrate that Afrikaans belongs to this category.

The classificatory status of *semicreole* as well as *pidgin* and *creole* is a perennial issue within typology. Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and Kotzé (the present volume) weigh in on the side of a noncategorical, gradient approach that plots the features and the languages involved on a scale, whereas Holm in his present paper sides with McWhorter (1998), who defends *creole* as a distinct typological category.

Holm cites two defining features of semicreoles (p. 365): i. partial restructuring and ii. the presence of matrilectal varieties of the European language. Implicit in his second feature is the demographic fact set forth in great detail concerning the relatively strong presence of matrilectals within the early contact situation. Both of these features are consonant with a continuum of restructuring. From Holm's own analysis it emerges that the three languages occupy different points along this continuum: a much more detailed comparison of restructuring in Afrikaans and Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese would be most instructive. Furthermore, he makes the point of a continuum of lects within Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese (p. 363), along the same lines as Kotzé in his paper on

gradient restructuring in Afrikaans. Though I see the usefulness of the term *semicreole* as indicative of some point on the continuum of restructuring, I won't be losing too much sleep about semicreoles as distinct typological categories.

Holm's position on Afrikaans is essentially that of Hesseling (1923): i. Afrikaans has been partially restructured, and ii. this happened early, before the end of the seventeenth century. The first part of Hesseling's position is now generally accepted, but though I myself am perfectly happy with the second point, consensus on this score seems to be lacking.

On his way to discussing the main issue of his paper, the nature of the adjectival declension in one variety of Afrikaans, Kotzé touches on the typology of restructured codes (cf. Holm's paper) and the historical interpretation of one regional variety of Afrikaans.

Kotzé's discussion of Eastern Frontier Afrikaans derives from the terminology and the distinctions introduced to the literature by Van Rensburg (1989, 1991). Van Rensburg, as well as Kotzé (*JGL* 13.4:383), assumes that Eastern Frontier Afrikaans has been less affected by restructuring and is hence more conservative than the other two dialects, Orange River Afrikaans and Cape (Vernacular) Afrikaans. Kotzé submits that Eastern Frontier Afrikaans had not been subject to creolization, as in the case of the other two dialects, but only to koineization, which is taken to mean that there remained a relatively close fit between Eastern Frontier Afrikaans and its Dutch antecedent ("nonstandard Dutch" in Van Rensburg 1989:439).

There is some evidence of more advanced restructuring in the Orange River and Cape varieties (Ponelis 1993:30 and the literature cited there), but on the whole, Eastern Frontier Afrikaans can definitely not be said to have escaped creolization: this variety also lost gender and a whole range of inflectional categories, to name but two general features. Orange River Afrikaans and Cape Afrikaans remained in contact longer with on the one hand Khoi and on the other Malay and Portuguese, but the antecedent of Orange River Afrikaans was subject to the same powerful dynamics of change in the unstable and heterogeneous contact situation at the early Cape.

Kotzé's data indicates that Afrikaans adjectival inflection has been restructured in a very interesting way. The declension was not sent packing in its totality but has been retained in a lexicalized form, which I may add, is rather opaque to learners. He presents evidence on the greater tendency in Cape Afrikaans to inflect the adjective. In fact, the

inflection is variable, but this variability has not yet been studied. Kotzé claims that Cape Vernacular Afrikaans “... remained a more conservative dialect” (p. 388) in that adjectival inflection is more common in this variety. But this does not necessarily follow. There are two opposite strategies of regularizing the Afrikaans adjectival inflection. One is to ditch the inflection altogether, as in *'n sleg ding* ‘a wretched thing’, and the other is to generalize the inflection, as in Cape Vernacular Afrikaans (Ponelis 1993: 373–374).

A pivotal claim in Den Besten’s paper is that the typological divide in linear structure between Afrikaans and Khoi is relatively insignificant: Den Besten suggests that the linear clause structure of Khoi differs from that of Afrikaans and Dutch “mostly in terms of secondary properties” (*JGL* 14.1:3), “only in terms of minor features” (p. 7) and that the V2 feature is secondary (p. 6).

Den Besten maintains the generative tradition, dating back at least to Koster 1975, of handling the distributional difference between Dutch and German verb-initial root clauses and verb-final subordinate clauses in terms of verb-final (SOV) basic word order: both Afrikaans and Khoi, he submits, have SOV basic word order.

Greenberg (1966) bases his sentential order typology on the declarative root clause. The priority of the root clause is in keeping both with Greenberg’s view on markedness and the research on root clause phenomena (Emonds 1971, Green 1976): root clauses are less marked and exhibit a more wide-ranging set of features than their subordinate counterparts.

Khoi (Nama) has verb-final clause structure (Greenberg 1966:109) as well as the following features harmonic with verb-finality: postpositions (Universal 4, Greenberg 1966:79), (accusative) case marking on substantives (Universal 41, Greenberg 1966:96) and preverbal object complement clauses. Within the Greenbergian paradigm, Afrikaans is a predominantly prepositional verb-initial language (with both V1 and V2 root structures), such as German and Dutch in Greenberg’s Basic Order Type 10 (Greenberg 1966:109; Ponelis 1979:493 ff.).

“Basic” and “basic word order” are defined very differently in the two approaches. In the generative model, a set of powerful mechanisms acting on underlying structures is involved, whereas the Greenbergian view defines these terms with respect to markedness. From a Greenbergian perspective, Den Besten’s position on SOV order being basic in Dutch and German stands markedness relations on their head by

considering verb-initial root structures as something less than basic. Furthermore, it plays havoc with the typology, creating a subtype with *basic* SOV order that lacks the cross-category harmonies characteristic of Greenberg's Type III languages; compare the discussion above [with respect to Khoi].

There is some correspondence between Afrikaans and Khoi as far as the verb-final structures are concerned: Afrikaans has verb-final structures in certain marked environments (including subordinate clauses) and a closed (marked) set of postpositions. However, in the Greenbergian view there is just no way to claim *minor* differences of linear order between these languages. They belong to distinct basic order types: Type II (SVO) vs. Type III (SOV; Greenberg 1966:109). Furthermore, the V2 feature of Afrikaans is no mere secondary feature (p. 6): it is part and parcel of the verb-initial linear structure of Afrikaans, and as such would have posed a formidable challenge to speakers of a well-defined verb-final language such as Khoi.

Khoi, in whatever shape or form, did not provide the template for Afrikaans linear structure. On the one hand, the typological distance is too great and on the other the correspondence in linear structure between Afrikaans and its dialectal Dutch base is too close to be circumvented in the search for historical antecedents (Ponelis 1993:311 ff.).

It would be interesting to know what a wide-ranging and systematic sociohistorical analysis of contact between Dutch-Afrikaans and Khoi as well as an investigation of current Nama-Afrikaans contact and bilingualism in Namibia will yield with respect to Khoi-Afrikaans interaction.

Roberge's account, much like Kotzé's, is concerned with a single feature (the indirect form of address) against the backdrop of general aspects of the early development of Afrikaans. The main thrust of the paper is to strengthen the case for convergence in the face of criticism of this concept in the literature.

The notion of the Afrikaans indirect form of address as a convergent feature, first mooted by Hesseling, has considerable appeal, which is strengthened by Roberge's evidence. However, as indicated in the literature cited by Roberge, the structure in Afrikaans has features that are lacking in the donor languages and that may be attributed to internal

development: the grammaticization of an important pragmatic variable relating to respect and social distance.<sup>1</sup>

In South Africa, Afrikaans historical linguistics is in a perilous state. It has vanishingly few practitioners and receives precious little attention in the curriculum, especially at undergraduate level. Afrikaans historical linguistics was conceived and to some considerable extent developed by “outsiders” such as Hesseling (an expert on Greek and a Dutchman to boot), Franken (a Flemish professor of French), Bouman and Raidt (a native speaker of German). For some decades, indigenous scholars made significant contributions, but this momentum has run out.

The present two-part special issue attests to the continuing impetus that Afrikaans historical linguistics receives from the “outside.”

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<sup>1</sup> A sentence such as *Maar Dominee het tog gesê dat jy/u nie sou kom nie* ‘But D. did say that you wouldn’t come’, with *jy/u* coreferential with *Dominee*, is perfectly well-formed, contrary to what Roberge proposes.

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