

Guest Editors' Preface

This special issue proposes a number of new views on recent developments in Afrikaans. The history of Afrikaans is traditionally connected to the issue of language contact. In connection with the historical development of Afrikaans, three scenarios are distinguished which can be sketched with the notions “superstrate” (with or without koineization, in the Netherlands and/or in South Africa), “interlect,” and “creolization.”

According to the superstrate view (see, for example, Scholtz 1950, Kloeke 1950, and Raidt n.y.) Afrikaans follows structural tendencies of the Dutch settlers' dialects from the seventeenth century that (in the Old World) were inhibited by the emerging Dutch standard language. According to Kloeke, the Afrikaans diminutive with *-(e)tjie*, among others, is an indication of the South Holland dialect roots of Afrikaans. The koineization of Dutch dialects seems to offer an excellent explanation for the fact that in Afrikaans the original oblique forms of the personal pronouns are in use as reflexive pronouns.

The internal history of Afrikaans has been determined to an almost greater extent by language contact. The interlect scenario, whose two main supporters are Ponelis (1993) and Van Rensburg (1996), assigns a central determinant role to changes induced by adult non-native speakers with a range of different L1s. According to this view, phenomena such as simplification and overgeneralization, as well as reduction and restructuring, persist in the Afrikaans of the groups concerned after their language shift, the most radical consequence of language contact. From this perspective, Van Rensburg (1996) doubts whether the associative *N-hulle* construction (e.g. *pa-hulle*, ‘Dad and his folks’) and *ons* as subject are due to direct “koi influence”; instead, he claims an “interlanguage” origin for both phenomena that is not linked to a specific mother tongue.

According to the creolization view (for example, Valkhoff 1966, Den Besten 1989, 2009, Roberge 2002, 2009, 2024), the (morpho-)syntactic and phonological developments of Afrikaans result from long-lasting, intensive contacts between specific seventeenth-century dialects of Dutch, the koine that had developed from this (so-called Kaaps-Hollands, i.e. Cape Dutch) by 1750, other European languages spoken by the settlers (Low German, High German, and French), indigenous African languages (particularly Khoekhoe), traditional and koineized varieties of Malay, and Asian Creole Portuguese. The latter two languages were spoken by slaves from the Far East and their descendants; they were also more or less mastered by those employed by the VOC, a large, multinational government-directed trading and shipping company, that was also active around the Cape Colony. Creolization seems to be the main culprit for restructuring and deflexion. Ponelis (1999) also mentions in this connection the loss of the preterite (cf. Abraham & Conradie 2000), gender loss, and the loss of the

distinction between full and reduced forms of personal and possessive pronouns. According to Den Besten (1996), the emergence and spread of the generalized relativizer *wat* should also be understood against the background of this scenario.

European Dutch has been a constant influence. Only in 1925 did Afrikaans attain the status of an official language. For decades, Afrikaans had coexisted with Dutch. In fact, there was a semi-diglossic relationship between the two, in which Afrikaans served as the oral, colloquial code. In somewhat exaggerated terms, standard Dutch was the prescriptive norm, while Afrikaans was the language people actually used. Early twentieth-century standard Dutch has demonstrably affected the codification of Afrikaans.

The history of Afrikaans is marked by language conflict. Since the end of the Apartheid regime and the introduction of the new constitution in the early 1990s, Afrikaans has been one of the twelve official languages of the Republic of South Africa (including South African sign language, recognised as an official language in 2024), but its main opponent today is English.

This special issue focuses on recent developments in the phonology and (morpho-) syntax of Afrikaans. For each phenomenon, the question is addressed whether it is contact-induced or internally generated or both.

Especially studies that implicitly or explicitly support the superstrate view seem to accommodate the formative effect of language-internal forces, but there is no principled reason why this should be different for the two contact scenarios.

In two of the articles on contact featuring in this special issue, the possible role of English is expressly considered – given its dominant position in the current sociolinguistic landscape of South Africa a modest number. In her contribution, **Audring** writes about the rather particular and at first sight confusing development of the Afrikaans gender system in current Afrikaans, with special attention to possible effects of contact with English. **Stell** examines seven variable phenomena in the Namibian Afrikaans of four ethnic groups; one of them is progressive marking. Stell argues that in the variation in progressive marking, English might play a role especially in the Afrikaans of White speakers.

Other articles refer to more general processes of language contact, independent of the particular language with which Afrikaans was in contact. According to **De Villiers**, over the history of Afrikaans, contact with a range of related and unrelated languages has led to divergence from Dutch in the development of *laat* [let]-V1 constructions. **Roberge** studies auxiliary doubling and thinks it likely that it is the intensity of contact with a range of languages which might have played a role here via Cape Dutch Pidgin. Similarly, **Biberauer & Cavirani-Pots** mention such contact as a possible factor in the reconfiguration of syntactic Infinitivus Pro Participio in modern Afrikaans varieties.

While all of the authors just mentioned thus found contact to play at least some role in the changes they describe, they also all leave open some role for language-internal change. **Pfiffner**, on the other hand, in her contribution on tonogenesis argues that it is *unlikely* that contact played any role, trying to find the explanation rather in a reweighting of acoustic cues and social factors.

Altogether, the overwhelming majority of the articles presented in this special issue show how language contact – in most cases not primarily with English – plays a

role in the current development of Afrikaans. At the same time, they show that this is an important role, but definitely not the only one.

Internal factors are argued to play a role in the phenomena discussed by **Audring** (semantic factors), **Biberauer & Cavirani-Pots** (the reorganization of the Afrikaans tense system), **Pfiffner** (a reweighting of phonetic cues to obstruent voicing – with reference to Hombert 1975 and Coetzee et al. 2018), **Roberge** (the competition between tense forms, the common practice in Afrikaans of expressing past events in the present tense – with reference to Ponelis 1993 and Donaldson 1993, respectively) and **De Villiers** (grammaticalization). **Stell** does not discuss possible internal factors involved in the seven variable phenomena in Namibian Afrikaans.

Several contributions to this special issue reveal that language contact and internal forces interact and typically language contact boosts internal developments. Compared to German, which is conservative in this respect, Dutch and English show developments in the gender system that could possibly be interpreted as “drift.” Afrikaans is more advanced than Dutch in this respect, and this could be rooted in a superstrate scenario. As mentioned above, Ponelis (1999) understood Afrikaans ‘gender loss’ as a result of creolization. **Audring** argues that, to the extent that language contact and especially contact with English plays a role, this unsurprisingly affects mainly the part of the system that is least stable. **Biberauer & Cavirani-Pots** attribute the divergence of the Afrikaans Infinitivus Pro Participio from Dutch to acquisition-driven optionality reduction and grammar reorganization (in the tense and light verb systems), and in part contact-driven grammaticalization and pragmaticalization, motivated by a consistently sociolinguistically complex setting. What little evidence there is suggests, according to **Roberge**, that Perfect auxiliary doubling “was parasitic on a supraregional or supracomunal variety of Dutch that emerged in the cities of Holland during the seventeenth century,” though it was “a recessive feature in Van Riebeeck’s South Hollandic dialect.” So possibly we are dealing with a koine product and that would fit the superstrate scenario. Later, “the encounter between Euro-Cape Dutch and an extended Cape Dutch Pidgin” presumably contributed to the maintenance of perfect auxiliary doubling. According to **De Villiers**, “Afrikaans’ contact with other related and unrelated languages throughout its history might have caused [pseudo-*let* imperatives] to grammaticalize faster than its Dutch counterpart.” The author analyzes developments within a minimalist framework. Only in the process of tonogenesis studied by **Pfiffner** does language contact seem to play *no* role.

We can tentatively conclude that in future research of phonological or (morpho-) syntactic variation and change in modern Afrikaans, both perspectives should be seriously considered. But this conclusion will not come as a complete bolt from the blue.

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