



Newsletter: September 2007

Welcome to the LSSA newsletter, we hope you find the information useful.

If you would like to add information to the LSSA newsletter please send the information to Prof Naudé: naudej.hum@ufs.ac.za.

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Scholarships: Graduate Studies in Sociolinguistics at UCT

The following advertisement recently appeared in the Mail & Guardian offering postgraduate opportunities in Sociolinguistics at UCT.

Note that the closing date is the 15th of October 2007.

[Advertisement](#)

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Review: The Genesis of Grammar

Announced at <http://linguistlist.org/get-book.html?BookID=31180>

AUTHOR(S): Bernd Heine and Tania Kuteva

TITLE: The Genesis of Grammar

SUBTITLE: A Reconstruction

PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press <http://www.oup.com/us>

YEAR: 2007

HARDBACK: ISBN: 9780199227761

Pages: 440

Price: U.K. £ 75.00

PAPERBACK: ISBN: 9780199227778

Pages: 440

Price: U.K. £ 25.99

BOOK URL: <http://www.oup.com/uk/catalogue/?ci=9780199227761>

Abstract

This book reconstructs what the earliest grammars might have been and shows how they could have led to the languages of modern humankind.

"Like other biological phenomena, language cannot be fully understood without reference to its evolution, whether proven or hypothesized," wrote Talmy Givón in 2002. As the languages spoken 8,000 years ago were typologically much the same as they are today and as no direct evidence exists for languages before then, evolutionary linguists are at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in biology. Bernd Heine and Tania Kuteva seek to overcome this obstacle by combining grammaticalization theory, one of the main methods of historical linguistics, with work in animal communication and human evolution. The questions they address include: do the modern languages derive from one ancestral language or from more than one? What was the structure of language like when it first evolved? And how did the properties associated with modern human languages arise, in particular syntax and the recursive use of language structures? The authors proceed on the assumption that if language evolution is the result of language change then the reconstruction of the former can be explored by deploying the processes involved in the latter. Their measured arguments and crystal-clear exposition will appeal to all those interested in the evolution of language, from advanced undergraduates to linguists, cognitive scientists, human biologists, and archaeologists.

Linguistic Field(s): Cognitive Science and Historical Linguistics

Written In: English(eng)

See this book announcement on our website:

<http://linguistlist.org/get-book.html?BookID=31180>

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Blackwell Publishing: <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com>

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Cambridge University Press: <http://us.cambridge.org>

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Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd: <http://www.continuumbooks.com>

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Equinox Publishing Ltd: <http://www.equinoxpub.com/>

European Language Resources Association - ELRA: <http://www.elra.info>

Georgetown University Press: <http://www.press.georgetown.edu>

Hodder Arnold: <http://www.hoddereducation.co.uk>

John Benjamins: <http://www.benjamins.com/>

Lincom GmbH: <http://www.lincom.eu>

MIT Press: <http://mitpress.mit.edu/>

Mouton de Gruyter: <http://www.mouton-publishers.com>

Multilingual Matters: <http://www.multilingual-matters.com/>

Oxford University Press: <http://www.oup.com/us>

Pagijong Press: <http://pjbook.com>

Palgrave Macmillan: <http://www.palgrave.com>

Peter Lang AG: <http://www.peterlang.com>

Rodopi: <http://www.rodopi.nl/>

Routledge (Taylor and Francis): <http://www.routledge.com/>

Springer: <http://www.springer.com>

OTHER SUPPORTING PUBLISHERS

Anthropological Linguistics: <http://www.indiana.edu/~anthling/>

CSLI Publications: <http://cslipublications.stanford.edu/>

International Pragmatics Assoc.: <http://www.ipra.be>

Kingston Press Ltd: <http://www.kingstonpress.com/>

Linguistic Association of Finland: <http://www.ling.helsinki.fi/sky/>

Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics / Landelijke - LOT:
<http://www.lotpublications.nl/>

Pacific Linguistics: <http://pacling.anu.edu.au/>

SIL International: <http://www.ethnologue.com/bookstore.asp>

St. Jerome Publishing Ltd: <http://www.stjerome.co.uk>

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Review: The Grammar of English-Afrikaans Code Switching

Announced at <http://linguistlist.org/get-book.html?BookID=31220>

AUTHOR: Ondene van Dulm

TITLE: The Grammar of English-Afrikaans Code Switching

SUBTITLE: A feature checking account

SERIES TITLE: LOT Disseration Series

PUBLISHER: Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics / Landelijke - LOT

<http://www.lotpublications.nl/>

YEAR: 2007

PAPERBACK: ISBN - 9789078328308

PAGES: 271

PRICE: Europe EURO 24.79

Abstract

This dissertation focuses on structural aspects of code switching between South African English and Afrikaans. Specifically, the main aim is to investigate the merit of an account of intrasentential code switching in terms of feature checking theory, a theory associated with minimalist syntax. The hypothesis is that feature checking theory and its related principles and operations provide an adequate framework within which to characterise and explain structural aspects of English-Afrikaans intrasentential code switching. A number of word order differences between English and Afrikaans, specifically involving verb position, are analysed within the framework of feature checking theory, where the movement of lexical items is proposed to be driven by the need to check strong uninterpretable features associated with functional heads. The constructions include instructions with adverbs, focalisation and topicalisation constructions, embedded that and wh clauses, and yes-no questions. On the basis of the feature checking analyses, predictions are made regarding the well-formedness of constructions of these types in which code switching between English and Afrikaans occurs.

The predictions are tested on the basis of data elicited from 30 fluent English-Afrikaans bilingual participants by means of (i) judgments of the relative wellformedness of visually-presented sentence pairs, (ii) judgments of the relative well-formedness of auditorily-presented utterance pairs, (iii) sentence construction, (iv) video clip description, and (v) magnitude estimation of the relative well-formedness of visually-presented sentence sets. The results indicate support for some of the predictions, but uniform support for the hypothesis is not evident. Further linguistic factors playing a role in participants' performance are discussed.

This dissertation is of interest to scholars in the field of bilingualism, particularly those interested in the application of syntactic theory to bilingual phenomena, and in experimental techniques tapping bilingual processing.

Linguistic Field(s): Linguistic Theories, Sociolinguistics and Syntax

Subject Language(s): Afrikaans(afr) and English(eng)

Written In: English(eng)

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St. Jerome Publishing Ltd: <http://www.stjerome.co.uk>

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Vacancy: Sociolinguistics at UCT (Senior Position)

This is to draw your attention to a vacancy in Sociolinguistics at the Senior Lecturer/ Associate Prof. level at UCT, which appeared in the Mail & Guardian last week. Please note that the deadlines are fairly tight. The position is open to all suitable applicants.

[Advertisement](#)

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Review: Anthropological Linguistics: Harrison (2007)

Announced at <http://linguistlist.org/issues/18/18-318.html>

AUTHOR: Harrison, K. David

TITLE: When Languages Die

SUBTITLE: The extinction of the world's languages and the erosion of human knowledge

PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press

YEAR: 2007

Lameen Souag, Department of Linguistics, School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London

DESCRIPTION

If you regard the lexicon as the least interesting part of a language, and cultural differences as a distraction from linguistics, then *When Languages Die* provides reasons to reconsider; if you are already interested in semantics and anthropological linguistics, it points to a variety of interesting topics, including a number drawn from the author's own fieldwork with Turkic minority languages of Siberia. This book is an introduction for the general reader to how languages encode the environmental knowledge and cultural practices of their speakers, and how language endangerment worldwide threatens this.

The first chapter, "A World of Many (Fewer) Voices", discusses linguistic diversity, why so many languages are in danger of disappearing or have already disappeared, and why it matters. To the latter question, he gives three answers, expanded on throughout the book: languages encode valuable knowledge about the natural world and how humans

interact with it; when a language disappears, a rich heritage of verbal arts goes with it; and every language potentially casts light on human cognition, and tests claimed linguistic universals. Aside from these, he points to the human tragedy of language endangerment - children beaten for speaking their own languages, parents regretting too late that their children don't speak their language - and the ties between language endangerment and broader issues of colonialism and coercion.

The second, "An Extinction of (Ideas about) Species", addresses the ecological knowledge embedded in human systems of naming and talking about living things. He emphasizes that this is not just a matter of learning to distinguish different species and inventing names for each. Rather, over generations a language comes to incorporate valuable information about different species' characteristics in its very vocabulary, and develops concise ways to package important information about them, both aiding the transmission of this information in a society without writing. It should be obvious to anyone who has learned the technical vocabulary of (say) phonetics, or syntax, or computing, that a concise, standardized way to refer to and differentiate entities commonly encountered in a given field is essential for working in, or even thinking clearly about, that field; while the particular names chosen may to some extent be arbitrary, the organization of a technical vocabulary and the differentiations it chooses to make are not. By that token, the tens of Tofa words for different colors and ages of reindeer (e.g. *_chary_* '5-year-old male castrated rideable reindeer') that the author describes are not merely an interesting fact about Tuvan vocabulary, but an important part of the technology of living off reindeer herding. Likewise, an animal name, or its classification in a folk taxonomy, may convey information about its habits or uses, not just its appearance (let alone its deduced ancestry, a factor that in theory trumps all others for taxonomists but is rarely of practical interest for others). Thus the Wayampi classify six species of toucan and a hawk together as *_tukāpewar_*, the toucan family, because the hawk eats the same food as the toucans - wild fruits which are also edible to humans. One might imagine that such technical vocabularies could readily be retained in the course of language shift; but in reality, language shift is generally accompanied by significant lifestyle changes, and these classification systems are even more endangered than the languages that host them. Among the Bari, a people of the Venezuelan rainforest, the loss of ethnobotanical knowledge was found to be about 40 to 60 percent in just a single generation.

The next chapter, "Many Moons Ago: Traditional Calendars and Time-Reckoning", describes some of the "ecological calendars" to be found in many parts of the world, viewing them not as crude attempts to approximate the calculated calendars developed in urban civilizations but as ingenious tools encapsulating knowledge needed for survival. In these systems, a month may be not only named for but defined by an observable annual event, such as the blooming of a flower or the snow falling on the mountains. Knowing the months implies knowing an event characteristic of each; defining at least one by its event allows the lunar calendar to be re-synchronized with the solar one without any need for calculations or day-counting. Shorter units of time, such as 'four days hence' or 'the time it takes a kettle to boil', are also discussed.

Chapter 4, "An Atlas in the Mind", discusses the linguistic encoding of geographical knowledge. Few skills can be more essential for a mobile group than the ability to keep their bearings; and the author argues that language plays an important role in this. Concepts which can optionally be encoded in English, such as whether movement is uphill or downhill, are seen to be obligatorily encoded in languages such as Lolovoli, where any kind of movement must be specified as 'up' (i.e. hard to go, easy to come back), 'down' (vice versa) or 'across' (no difference in difficulty either direction). Within even a single hut with a level floor, movements will be specified as 'up' or 'down' with reference to the slope outside; and trans-island travel is 'up' or 'down' depending on whether it goes against or with the prevailing winds. In many of the languages discussed, place names are exceptionally numerous and are often transparent, with

anatomical metaphors or mythical significance making them more memorable; equally important, geography is a regular topic of conversation.

"Silent Storytellers, Lost Legends" takes a slightly different turn, looking at oral narrative and how it differs from the written kind, including all sorts of improvisations and gestures that are not captured by a transcription or a publication. He examines several cases of verbal arts in practice, and an indigenously developed orthography he came across in his own fieldwork.

In "New Rice, Old Legends", he moves to local biological knowledge and its erosion under the pressure of international agricultural methods. While this chapter is perhaps the least linguistic one in the book, he once again emphasizes the diversification of semantic fields relevant to a traditional way of life and their likely impoverishment as that way of life changes; in this case, that semantic impoverishment corresponds to a genetic impoverishment, as hundreds of local strains of rice or millet are replaced by a handful of major types produced abroad.

"Endangered Number Systems" goes beyond the usual discussion of different bases to examine a significant part of the diversity of number systems across languages and cultures, from body part counting systems that go beyond our twenty digits to cover elbows and nostrils to languages that express integers between the tens as motion towards the next ten, rather than using addition or subtraction to reach the number from another ten. Inevitably, he briefly addresses the Pirahã question, but more as part of a wide range of possibilities than as a unique special case. He also looks at Greenberg's typological universals of number systems, and a few exceptions to them, and notes that, with borrowing or pattern copying particularly common in this domain, number systems are in many cases even more endangered than the languages in which they are embedded.

The final chapter, "Worlds within Words", departs somewhat from the book's overall theme of semantics to examine typological diversity in general. Even here, semantics is never far away, with discussions on such issues as counter and classifier systems and obligatorily encoded politeness systems; but a variety of less semantic topics are rapidly touched on, from phonological diversity and uses of reduplication to language change and the (so far unanswerable) question of whether one language can be more complex than another. He notes that without examining a variety of threatened languages we would never even be likely to suspect that certain structures (be they syntactic, phonological, or semantic; he gives examples of each) are possible in human language. If we had no data on a handful of Carib languages with very few speakers, for example, we would still be attempting to explain the imagined impossibility of basic word orders in which the object precedes the subject.

Between each of these chapters is a brief case study recounting a personal experience with speakers of some particular endangered language, illustrating and bringing home the points in the previous chapter.

EVALUATION

I found the book engaging and non-technical enough to arouse the interest of non-linguists, but wide-ranging enough and well-sourced enough to appeal to linguists as well. There are details that might be quibbled with, such as what he acknowledges to be the inherently dubious efforts to count languages in the first chapter; and to some linguists its extensive discussion of diversification within semantic fields may seem more like anthropology than linguistics. But overall, the book makes a good case that the study of vocabulary casts light on both cognition and culture, and underlines the urgent need to document more endangered languages better and to fix the social inequalities that usually play a large role in making them endangered.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Lameen Souag is a doctoral student at SOAS (London). He is examining, and seeking to explain differences in, the effects of long-term morphosyntactic contact on two geographically isolated languages of the Sahara: Korandje, a Songhay language spoken in the Algerian oasis of Tabelbala, and Siwi, a Berber language spoken in the Egyptian oasis of Siwa. He will begin fieldwork in late 2007. He maintains a linguistics blog, Jabalal-Lughat (<http://lughat.blogspot.com>).

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Call for Papers - Computer Science and Automatic Translation

Special Issue of *The Journal of Computer Science and Engineering in Arabic*, vol 2, No 1

Guest editor: Yahya Benkhedda, Chouaib Doukkali University, Morocco

A major concern among many Arab scientists and governments today, in their endeavors to catch up with the industrialized nations, relates to the issue of the language of scientific communication and research. Some Arab countries have arabized some fields of science, others still use English or French, the languages of the former colonizers, as the major media of scientific education and research. These differing educational policies result from the ongoing debate on whether to achieve scientific and technological progress by learning these foreign languages or by resorting to translation. There seems to be some agreement that while learning these foreign languages will undeniably enhance the individual scientist's capacity to develop his/her potential and to become part of a highly interactive and globalizing scientific community, it cannot contribute much to developing the scientific communication capability of the Arabic language.

A look at the history of science will quickly reveal that scientific knowledge has progressed largely by means of translation. During the Abbasid dynasty, for instance, much time and effort were invested in translation; a House of Wisdom was established in the ninth century to sponsor translations from Greek into Arabic. By the end of the Middle Ages, European nations had translated back much of the scientific achievements of the Islamic civilization as a first step towards the Renaissance. Thus, for instance, the replacement of Roman numerals with the decimal positional number system and the invention of algebra allowed more advanced mathematics. Translation was the main tool which made this kind of cross-cultural scientific fertilization possible and allowed the borrowing languages to develop their own means of scientific communication.

It is in this spirit that the JCSEA was launched a few months ago to serve as an Arabic-speaking forum for scientific communication in the field of Computer Science. (Information on the editorial policy as well as the first issue of this journal may be found at <http://www.phillips-publishing.com/jcsea/>).

The goal of this special issue on translation is twofold. Our primary objective is to contribute to the development of a scientific infrastructure for Arabic, in terms of scientific discourse conventions, grammatical structures and lexis, by publishing

translations of seminal papers in the field of Computer Science originally published in other languages (English, French, German, Russian, etc.). Our secondary aim is to attract Arabic speaking computer scientists' attention to the related field of machine translation where computer and language skills converge to produce increasingly cutting edge translation software. The idea is that by translating these papers into Arabic, we create a platform on which Arabic speaking scholars can take these seminal ideas and build on them, in the same way that other researchers have done in the paper's original language.

This call for papers is, therefore, intended for both Computer Science specialists and translators and linguists who share similar concerns about enhancing the Arabic language scientific communication potential and/or developing its automatic translation compatibility. Interested CS scholars and computational linguists who have identified a specific computer science and/or machine translation paper are invited to contact the guest editor with a pre-proposal, specifying the journal title, the original language of publication, title, abstract, and keywords of the selected paper. Interested translators are invited to send the guest editor a summary of their translation experience, specifying the source language(s) to translate from. They will then be assigned a paper for translation into Arabic together with the contact details of the CS scholar or the computational linguist who proposed the paper in question. Translators will be encouraged to consult with their computer science or linguist partners to negotiate possible content/form issues. Native Arabic speaking CS specialists or computational linguists who wish to offer their own translation of the selected paper are of course encouraged to do so. The proposed translations of selected papers will then be reviewed by a team of Arabic speaking CS specialists, linguists, and translators.

Schedule:

30th October 2007: deadline for submitting proposals

30th November 2007: notification of acceptance.

30th December 2007: deadline for submission of translations

31st January 2008: referee feedback forwarded to translators

28 February 2008: submission of final versions of translations to guest editor

April 2008: publication date.

Contact Details:

Yahya Benkhedda

Chouaib Doukkali University

English Department

Eljadida 24000

Morocco

Email: ybenkhedda@hotmail.com

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Translation day Seminar: "Subverting the West: Engaging Language Practice as African Interpretation"

AFRIKAANS HIERONDER

Dear colleague

The Programme in Language Practice at the University of the Free State cordially invites all stakeholders in language practice to a Translation Day Seminar on 9 October 2007 in the CR Swart Auditorium on the campus.

Theme: SUBVERTING THE WEST: ENGAGING LANGUAGE PRACTICE AS AFRICAN INTERPRETATION.

Apart from papers read by Prof. JA Naudé (UFS), Dr. J Marais (UFS), Prof. J. Conolly (DUT) and Ms. L. Makhubu (DUT), a full session will be devoted to a panel discussion involving the audience.

Against the background of Cabinet's proposal for language services for all Government departments, the Seminar Day seeks to put up for discussion the African context in which language practice takes place. It will also be exploring an approach to translator education that is engaged in its African context by means of service learning. The following four focus areas will receive attention: engaging translator education by means of a socio-constructivist approach; challenging the dominance of Western concepts in translator training and practice; exploring African indigenous oral knowledge as an interface for language practice; questioning code-switching in African interpreting settings.

Registration fee: R50

Closing date for registrations: 1 October 2007.

For enquiries, [registration form](#), and [programme](#) details, contact Kobus Marais at jmarais.hum@ufs.ac.za or +27(0)51-4012798.

We are looking forward to meeting you and having some robust discussions on our profession and, particularly, its context.

Kind regards.

Dr. Kobus Marais
(Organiser)

ENGLISH ABOVE

Geagte kollega

Die Program in Taalpraktyk aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat nooi alle belanghebbendes in taalpraktyk hartlik uit na 'n Vertaaldagseminaar op 9 Oktober 2007 in die CR Swart-ouditorium op die kampus.

Tema: SUBVERTING THE WEST: ENGAGING LANGUAGE PRACTICE AS AFRICAN INTERPRETATION.

Behalwe vir referate deur prof. J.A. Naudé (UV), dr. J. Marais (UV), prof. J. Conolly (DUT) en me. L. Makhubu (DUT) sal 'n volle sessie afgestaan word aan 'n paneelbespreking wat die gehoor sal betrek.

Die Seminaardag wil teen die agtergrond van die Kabinet se voorstel oor taaldienste in alle regeringsdepartemente die Afrika-konteks waarbinne taalpraktyk plaasvind, op die tafel plaas. Dit wil ook 'n benadering tot betrokke vertaleropleiding deur middel van

samelewingsdiensleer in die Afrika-konteks ondersoek. Daar word op die volgende vier gebiede gefokus: hoe om betrokke vertaleropleiding deur middel van 'n sosiokonstruktivistiese benadering 'n werklikheid te maak; hoe om die oorheersing van Westerse konsepte in vertaleropleiding en vertaalpraktyk uit te daag; 'n ontdekkingsstog oor die rol wat orale inheemse kennis in Afrika in die taalpraktyk kan speel; kodeverwisseling in tolking binne die Afrika-konteks.

Registrasiefooi: R50
Sluitingsdatum vir registrasies: 1 Oktober 2007.

Vir navrae, 'n [registrasievorm](#) en volledige [program](#), skakel Kobus Marais by jmarais.hum@ufs.ac.za of +27(0)51-4012798.

Ons sien uit daarna om u te ontmoet en om 'n robuuste gesprek oor ons profesie en in besonder die konteks daarvan te voer.

Vriendelike groete

Dr. Kobus Marais
(Organiseerder)

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Localisation Research Centre: Server Offline

A number of websites hosted by the Localisation Research Centre will be offline for server maintenance from Friday 31 August at 17:00 GMT to Monday 03 September 09:00 GMT.

The websites that will be offline are:

www.localisation.ie
www.electonline.org
www.igniteweb.org
www.bestglobalwebsiteaward.com
www.localisation.ie/education
www.gilc.info

We apologise for any inconvenience that this may cause.

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