

Possible topics for BA/MA theses supervised by Hilde Gunnink

Bantu-Khoisan language contact

Bantu languages spoken in southern Africa are known to have been in contact with various languages of the Khoisan phylum. This has resulted in the adoption of clicks in various Bantu languages, but also in other, less obvious types of structural and/or lexical interference. As part of my ongoing research project, various thesis topics are possible:

- **Yeyi** (possibly with fieldwork)
The Bantu language Yeyi (R41) is spoken in Namibia and Botswana. It has been subject to quite extensive descriptive work (e.g. Sommer 1995, Fulop, Ladefoged et al. 2003, Seidel 2008, Lukusa 2009, among others). Nonetheless, areas where more targeted fieldwork is still required also exist, e.g. names of plants and animals, and the lexical documentation of Yeyi as spoken in Namibia.
Either by doing original fieldwork, or by only making use of published sources, possible topics for research are the classification of Yeyi: although obviously a Bantu language, its more precise classification is as of yet uncertain; Khoisan influence in Yeyi, either lexical or grammatical.
- **Herero and Wambo**
Herero and Wambo are major Bantu languages spoken in Namibia, and have both been described in a fair amount of detail (e.g. Baucom 1972, Elderkin 2001, Möhlig, Marten et al. 2002, Fivaz and Shikomba 2003, Möhlig and Kavari 2008, Kavari 2013, among others). Although neither language makes use of clicks, ongoing contact with Khoisan languages, most notably Khoekhoe, makes the presence of Khoisan influence in other domains of the language likely. Such has already been proposed for the presence of head-final nominal compounds in Herero. A possible thesis topic would be the investigation of such Khoisan influence, either based on published sources or by combining these with original fieldwork.
- **South African Bantu languages**
In the Nguni languages and the Southern Sotho languages, Khoisan influence is obvious in the form of click consonants. Possible sources for click words in these languages are lexical borrowings from Khoisan languages, click insertion (motivated by the sociolinguistic practice of *hlonipha* and/or by sound symbolism) and neologisms. The last attempt at identifying Khoisan lexical borrowings in South African Bantu languages took place in the seventies of the previous century, and since then, the documentation of Khoisan languages and their classification has much improved. Possible topics to investigate as part of a thesis could be the identification of Khoisan lexical borrowings among Bantu click words; the way click words are shared either among Bantu click languages or between Bantu click languages and related languages that do not use phonemic clicks.

Language description: any topic in the field of language description, either based on fieldwork or working on published data

African English(es)

English as spoken in various African countries differs markedly from that spoken in the United Kingdom. Possible topics for a thesis could be a study of the differences between a specific variety of African English and (more) standard varieties, for instance differences in phonology, syntax, and lexicon. Such a study could be based on fieldwork, or by making use of, for instance, English language

radio or television broadcasts, or English as used by Africans online. Data could also be collected from speakers of African English varieties living in Belgium.

Anyone interested in these or related topics is welcome to e-mail me at hilde.gunnink@ugent.be for further details.

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