

Potential BA/MA thesis topics Elisabeth Kerr

I am a linguist, Africanist, and syntactician based at the Department of Languages and Cultures. My research covers Bantu and Bantoid languages, with a particular focus on Cameroon, where I have conducted 8 fieldwork stays; I have also conducted linguistic fieldwork in Kenya, have worked on comparative projects looking at Bantu languages across sub-Saharan Africa, and have a background in general and theoretical linguistics.

I am willing to (co-)supervise any theses on descriptive or theoretical linguistics, Cameroon, or Niger-Congo languages (especially from West/Central Africa), and can provide supervision in Dutch, English, or French. Here are some general topics:

- Comparative Bantu grammar
- Grammatical description of a Niger-Congo language (especially from West/Central Africa)
- Linguistic fieldwork methodology
- Linguistic revitalisation projects with community members (e.g. working with schools, orthography development, dictionary creation)
- Digitising older linguistic materials (e.g. missionary grammars, collections of folktales)
- Syntactic theory (from formal or functional perspectives)
- Historical linguistics
- Linguistic typology

Examples of theses I have previously (co-)supervised:

- The encoding of referents in Bamana storytelling (MA)
 - This student looked at how the way people refer to someone (“she”, “the woman”, “that woman over there”) changes over the course of a story, based on a digital corpus of Bamana, a Mande language of Mali (information structure / digital methods / Mande / storytelling)
- Subject inversion in Elhomwe (BA)
 - This student conducted fieldwork in Malawi on the Bantu language Elhomwe, investigating what factors condition the use of a syntactic construction where subjects appear after the verb (“Sam arrived” → “Arrived Sam”) (syntax / descriptive linguistic / linguistic typology)
- Noun classes in the Mvumbo variety of Kwasio (BA)
 - This student conducted fieldwork in Cameroon on the Bantu language Kwasio, looking at the system of nominal prefixes and agreement patterns for nouns (which is reduced in comparison to the system reconstructed for Proto-Bantu) (morphology / descriptive linguistics / comparative Bantu)