

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. Hans den Besten's involvement with Afrikaans

Perhaps it is best to begin this introduction by quoting from a recent call for contributions from South African scholars to a volume honouring Hans den Besten put out by his colleagues, Johan Oosthuizen and Theresa Biberauer, from Stellenbosch University and Cambridge University, respectively:

Hans den Besten (1948-2010) made numerous contributions to Afrikaans linguistics over a period of nearly three decades. ..., these contributions covered a wide range of topics, including grammatical structure, vocabulary, and the historical development of Afrikaans. Hans was also particularly interested in the structure and vocabulary of Khoekhoen. In 2005, he was appointed as Professor Extraordinaire in General Linguistics at Stellenbosch University.

The appointment in Stellenbosch and the efforts to honour Hans's work point both to the importance of his work for the study of Afrikaans, and to his excellent relations, in fact often deep friendships, with his South African colleagues.

These relations date from the time that, after the end of the Apartheid regime, the cultural boycott of South Africa was lifted. The University of Amsterdam, where Hans studied and then worked, strongly endorsed this boycott and hence it was not until 1990 that Hans visited South Africa for the first time, having been invited by Christo van Rensburg of the University of the Free State. Hans also attended the annual conference of the Linguistic Society of Southern Africa which was held in Stellenbosch that year. There he met Johan Oosthuizen, whom Hans later, until his untimely death, was to supervise in his doctoral research. At the conference Hans is reputed to have remarked:

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Johan Oosthuizen and Paul Roberge for detailed comments on this introduction, and to other members of the Linguistics Department at the University of Stellenbosch for comments on the reception of Hans den Besten's research in South Africa.

[Afrikaans original] “Ek het gedink Suid-Afrika is ’n linguistiese woestyn, maar ek sien nou dis eerder ’n semi-woestyn!”

‘I thought South Africa was a linguistic desert, but in reality it is a semi-desert!’

The year 1990 was far from the beginning, however, of Hans’s involvement with Afrikaans. Coming from a background of Dutch, German and General Linguistics, and quickly having become very well respected in the heady Amsterdam scene of 1970s generative linguistics, Hans became interested in other languages and language varieties related to Dutch and German, including Yiddish and Afrikaans. These varieties turned out to have word order patterns sometimes similar to but also subtly different from the intricate rules that Hans helped chart formally for Dutch and German.

Once his interest was aroused, Hans did not let go, and he started on a research program combining structural analysis with typology, philology, and historical sociolinguistic reconstruction. He was also involved in teaching Afrikaans at the University of Amsterdam, when Afrikaans language and literature was still a minor there. As pointed out by his Stellenbosch colleague Christine Anthonissen, Hans’s work stressed the fact that Afrikaans possesses structures with ‘nothing similar in Dutch’. This then led him to start looking for patterns found in Khoekhoen, Malay, Creole Portuguese, and those provided by Universal Grammar that may have been the source of these Afrikaans structures, in a seemingly unending series of papers. The presence of colleagues interested in Creole languages in Amsterdam stimulated him in placing the development of Afrikaans in a more general perspective. In this book some of these papers are reproduced.

The reception of his work in South Africa at the time was mixed if not cool. Afrikaans nationalism was still strong, stressing the ‘sophistication’ of Afrikaans and its strong roots in Netherlandic dialects. In the beginning, only some scholars, such as the historical linguist and Khoekhoen specialist Gabriel Stefanus (Gawie) Nienaber (1903-1994) appreciated his work. Hans succeeded, however, in de-ideologizing the field of Afrikaans grammar and history. Currently the crucial idea of plural origins for this language, also leading to considerable internal variation in the different groups of speakers, has gained much more acceptance. Hence the title of this volume, which underlines the different roots of Afrikaans.

On his numerous visits to South Africa Hans collaborated and interchanged ideas with a large number of scholars, including Christo van Rensburg, Johan Lubbe and Theo du Plessis (all from the Free State University), Hester Waher and Johan Oosthuizen, (University of Cape Town), Rufus Gouws and Fritz Ponelis (University of Stellenbosch), Hein Grebe (University

of Pretoria), Willem Botha (*Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, Stellenbosch), and Anna Coetzee (Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, currently University of Johannesburg). Even the reclusive Afrikaans novelist Karel Schoeman mentions Hans's work in one of his books on the Cape Dutch period. Hans also had a close working relation with Paul Roberge (University of North Carolina) who, like him, has done important work on the genesis of Afrikaans and who is also Professor Extraordinaire in General Linguistics at Stellenbosch University.

The bibliography in this volume includes all Hans' writings on Afrikaans .

## 2. Afrikaans and the history of South Africa

While the details of the genesis of Afrikaans are still being hotly contested, the broad outlines of the history of the settlement in southern Africa, and in particular, the Cape of Good Hope (currently the Western Cape Province) are clear. The relevant dates can be very briefly summarized as in Table 1 (see also Roberge 2002). The focus here is on the early period, since Hans den Besten was particularly interested in the genesis of Afrikaans.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Significance</i>
10.000 BP	Originally nomadic Khoekhoe and San groups settle in the Cape; cattle herding	Khoekhoe were a significant group of early users of Cape Dutch Pidgin (CDP)
1652	Jan van Riebeeck settles in the Cape and builds a ship victualling station	Varieties of Dutch brought to the Cape
1679	Simon van der Stel founds Stellenbosch	A larger semi-stable population of Dutch speakers settles in the area
1660-1700	Extensive trading with the Khoekhoe populations, but gradual destruction of the traditional culture and political system	A contact language emerged involving both Khoekhoe and Dutch elements
1660-1808	About 63.000 slaves are brought to South Africa to work the farms, from Angola, Dahomey, Madagascar, Mozambique, Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka, and the Mascarenes	Varieties of Malagasy, Malay, and Indo-Portuguese Creole brought to the Cape, which fed into early Afrikaans.
1713 and	smallpox epidemics in killed most of the	By the mid 18 <sup>th</sup> century the

1755	Khoekhoe	Khoisan languages had almost disappeared completely from the western Cape.
1795	The English capture the Cape province	English brought in as a second dominant language, and slow subsequent spread of English in public life
1875	"First Language Movement": in Paarl, The Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners is established, the mission of which was advocacy of Afrikaans in the public sphere, the development of Afrikaans as a written medium, and standardization. Some influential Dutchmen promote the use of Afrikaans as well.	Afrikaans is increasingly recognized and constructed as a language in its own right.
1880-81 and 1899-1902	Anglo-Boer wars	Increasing dominance of English. "Second Language Movement," particularly as a response to the Anglicization policies of Lord Milner.
1910-1931	1910: Official creation of the Union of South Africa as a dominion of the British Empire; Independence follows in 1931.	Afrikaans recognized as an official language of the Union in 1925
1948	The Nationale Party wins the. Their agenda was to institutionalize complete racial segregation (Apartheid).	Afrikaans and English are adopted as the two official languages of South Africa.
1996	New constitution is adopted by the Congress	Afrikaans recognized as one of the eleven official languages of the Republic of South Africa.

These events form the backdrop to Hans den Besten's portrayal of the emergence of Afrikaans, as will be clear from the papers in this volume.

### 3. Structure of the present volume

Although this was not always easy and to some extent artificial given the multiple cross-links, we have divided the material in this book into three parts.

In **Part One**, the focus is on the *structure* of Afrikaans as such. Hans den Besten does not try to assimilate Afrikaans to Dutch, as so many of his predecessors. While the position of the verb had been a central question in Hans's work on continental Germanic, many of his papers on Afrikaans deal with the noun phrase. 'The origins of the Afrikaans pre-nominal possessive system(s)' and 'The complex ancestry of the Afrikaans associative constructions' are good examples of this. It is shown that the Afrikaans nominal systems are different from those of Dutch in many ways. Two further chapters deal with relative clauses: 'What a little word can do for you: *wat* in Afrikaans possessive relatives' and 'Afrikaans relative *wat* and West-Germanic relative clause systems'; den Besten's main claim is here that Afrikaans *wat* may look like a relative but should rather be analyzed as a conjunction. The paper 'Demonstratives in Afrikaans and Cape Dutch Pidgin: a first attempt' sketches the development of the Afrikaans demonstrative system as a combination of an autonomous evolution from the original Dutch system and CDP influence; it thus bridges the descriptive papers in this first section and the more historical and comparative papers in the next section (although the comparative perspective is always present in Hans den Besten's work). The section concludes with a phonological excursion, rare in his intellectual trajectory: 'Speculations on [χ]-elision and intersonorantic [v] in Afrikaans.'

In **Part Two**, a number of studies on the *origins* of Afrikaans is collected. First, there is the seminal 'The Dutch Pidgins of the Old Cape Colony', originally published as 'Die niederländischen Pidgins der alten Kapkolonie'. This is followed by the reflex of Hans den Besten's first set of speculations 'On the "verbal suffix" –UM of Cape Dutch Pidgin: morphosyntax, pronunciation and origins', a topic which kept returning in his work. This paper is one of a series in which the potential contribution of Khoekhoe is charted. 'Relexification and pidgin development: The case of Cape Dutch Pidgin' offers details of the forces that shaped CDP, whereas 'Khoekhoe Syntax and its Implications for L2 Acquisition of Dutch and Afrikaans' argues that Khoekhoe and Dutch were sufficiently similar syntactically to easily combine into a new language. 'Reduplication in Afrikaans' and

‘Double Negation and the Genesis of Afrikaans’ focus on features of Afrikaans that Dutch lacks, whereas ‘From Khoekhoe Foreigner Talk via Hottentot Dutch to Afrikaans: The Creation of a Novel Grammar’ retells the history of the development of Afrikaans with emphasis on the Khoekhoe contribution, on the one hand, and on the Creole phase(s), on the other. This section closes with Hans den Besten’s main contributions to the debates surrounding the role of the enslaved Asians brought to the Cape: ‘Creole Portuguese in South Africa: Malayo- or Indo-Portuguese?’ and ‘The slaves’ languages in the Dutch Cape Colony and Afrikaans *vir*.’

Finally, in **Part Three**, two *programmatic* papers of Hans den Besten are reproduced, as well as four appreciations by colleagues who help to situate his work in current debates. In ‘A badly harvested field: The growth of linguistic knowledge and the Dutch Cape Colony until 1796’, Den Besten makes a first attempt in describing the earliest linguistic research carried out at the Cape; in ‘Desiderata for Afrikaans historical linguistics’ he proposes to put more energy into the investigation of archival data, Early Afrikaans and Early-Modern Afrikaans, the topic of ‘mixed’ stages, parallel constructions; to reopen the discussion on a possible founder dialect; and to try to answer the question which languages (apart from Khoekhoe) Cape Dutch has been in contact with.

In the first of the **Appreciations**, *Theresa Biberauer* places Hans’s work in the context of generative grammar, in particular the comparative study of the West-Germanic languages to which Afrikaans belongs. *Ana Deumert* focuses on the archival work of Hans, and the unearthing of little known sources for the history of the language. *John Holm* links Hans’s contribution to the debates about the position of Afrikaans among the Creole languages. Is it a Creole or not. What are the relevant arguments? Holm argues that Afrikaans, like Vernacular Brazilian Portuguese, is best viewed as a semi-Creole. Finally, *Paul Roberge* situates Hans’s work in the history of the debates about the genesis of Afrikaans, in large part held in South Africa itself, of course, and in the evolution of the views about the origin of this fascinating language.

The volume concludes with a hopefully complete list of the publications of Hans den Besten on Afrikaans and with a general bibliography for all the papers in the book.

#### References:

Roberge, Paul T. 2002. Afrikaans: Considering origins. In Mesthrie, Rajend (ed.), *Language in South Africa*, 79–103. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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