The Construction of a Homogeneous Standard Afrikaans

Camiel Hamans
ACLC, University of Amsterdam
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

This contribution deals with the standardisation of Afrikaans, one of the eleven official languages of South Africa. After a description of how a language derived from Dutch originated at the southernmost point of Africa, it is emphasised how this standardisation process, which reached its peak in the last quarter of the 19th century, focused exclusively on white Afrikaans varieties. Even non-white varieties that already had a tradition of printed texts, such as Arabic-Afrikaans or Genadendaal-Afrikaans, did not play any role in this standardisation process. This brief overview of the history of Afrikaans shows how the choice and construction of standard Afrikaans is of a political nature.

1 Introduction

For speakers of Dutch, Afrikaans, one of the eleven official languages of South-Africa, does not seem far away. This is easy to understand. Dutch sailors already established a refreshment station at the tip of South Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, in the 17th century. This station grew into a real settlement that formed the basis for present-day South Africa. However, the Dutch were not the first who landed there. It was Portuguese navigators and explorers who sailed around the southern tip of South Africa for the first time at the end of the 16th century.

This article examines successively the first centuries of private Dutch colonisation of the Cape, the takeover of the colony by the British, which caused the descendants of the original white 'Dutch'-speaking colonisers to leave or feel marginalised, and the resulting emancipatory actions of this group, which started to call themselves 'Afrikaners'. The first part of this contribution concludes with a brief sketch of the development of Afrikaner nationalism into Apartheid, in which the role of Afrikaans was strongly emphasised.

The second part focuses on linguistic history, closely connected to colonial political developments. In particular, it discusses how Afrikaans developed from Dutch. Extensive attention is paid to the misconceptions that the language of the colonists was homogeneous and that there was no language diversity at the Cape in the later colonial Dutch period. It then describes how an association consisting of middle-class white Afrikaans-speakers who felt

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marginalised united in an emancipatory movement; in order to achieve their goal, they wanted to standardise their everyday language in order to give themselves and their language a formal place in the British-dominated society – this because they considered their Afrikaans vernacular as an important feature of their identity.

This group of language planners paid no attention to language varieties other than those of their own white community and was firmly convinced that there were hardly any language differences in this variety. Recent studies show that this was not the case, as will be shown through the discussion of two varieties: Arabic-Afrikaans and Genadendal-Dutch.

The third and last part of this study explains how this view of white linguistic homogeneity is related to a theoretical explanation of the origins of Afrikaans which claims that the language goes back exclusively to a European basis. Diametrically opposed to this is the view that Afrikaans shows traits of a creolised language. Finally, and following on from this last vision, a recent development is briefly discussed in which a clearly creolised urban variant, Kaaps, is claiming its rightful place.

2 The arrival of the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope

On 6 April 1652, Jan van Riebeeck, an explorer sent by the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC), landed at the Cape, where he was supposed to start a refreshment station for Dutch Indiamen[1] (De Villiers 2012: 40–41, Carstens & Raidt 2019: 45; see Figure 1), hoping that the local population of Khoikhoi, formerly known as Hottentots or Hotnots, now mainly called Khoi, could provide passing ships with sufficient food and fresh water. However, the great number of sheep and cattle, 300 of each annually, which the Dutch needed for their sailors greatly exceeded the capabilities of these local pastoralists. In addition, there was a need for vegetables. Hence some of the employees were granted land and a license to sell the proceeds from it. This is how the Cape Colony was born (De Villiers 2012: 40–43). The Dutch did not try to learn the language of the Khoikhoi because they considered that language with its click sounds too complicated. Since they nevertheless had to communicate with the Khoikhoi, they made use of Khoikhoi interpreters who had great linguistic talents: “They very soon spoke a fluent, but somewhat broken Dutch with the Europeans, and a form probably similarly affected of Malayo-Portuguese with the slaves” (Zimmer 1992: 349–350).

Since the VOC mainly sent male employees to the Cape, a shortage of white women arose. Consequently, a number of the men entered into unofficial

[1] Indiaman is a general name for a merchant ship for the trade between Europe and East Asia.

relationships with indigenous women, but marriages also occurred. Initially, this was not seen as a problem. For instance, the mother of one of the 17th-century successors of Van Riebeeck, Simon van der Stel,[2] was of mixed race (Nel 2016: 62). It was not until 1685 that a formal objection was made to mixed marriages. VOC commissioner Hendrik van Rheede, who had been sent to the Cape as an inspector, forbid 'full' mixed marriages; however, he accepted marriages between Europeans and persons of mixed race. Of course, this meant that European men and mixed-race women, "half-slag slawe-vrouwe", got married.[3] He also ordered mixed-race children to be taught to read and write so that they could be integrated in European society (Shell 2012: 68).

Van Riebeeck considered the Khoikhoi shepherds and livestock breeders as unfit for agriculture and manual labour. Rather, he wanted visiting sailors to engage in this sort of work. The board of the VOC decided otherwise and gave Van Riebeeck permission to import slaves from 1658 on (De Villiers 2012: 45), and slavery continued to exist at the Cape until 1834. Most of the slaves were natives of Mozambique, India, Sri Lanka and the Indonesian archipelago and did not share a common language. Besides their native languages and Pidgin Dutch, two *lingua francas* were used among them: Pasar Malay and Creole Portuguese (Den Besten in Van der Wouden 2012: 98).

The situation of the Khoikhoi at the Cape became increasingly dire, in particular because of three imported smallpox epidemics which affected them in the 18th century. The consequences for the Khoikhoi were disastrous: some tribes were completely obliterated and others were decimated. Those who could save themselves fled and moved north. Consequently, there were no tribal Khoikhoi left at the Cape, only a very impoverished proletariat that no longer owned land and cattle and that had to give up its own language and way of life in order to survive (De Villiers 2012: 47–48).[4]

[2] Simon van der Stel is the founder of Stellenbosch.

[3] During the Dutch period, up to 1795, more than a thousand female slaves and indigenous women married European men, whereas only two freed slaves married wives of European descent (Shell 2012: 69).

[4] For a more extensive historical overview of the topic of this section see Hamans (2021).

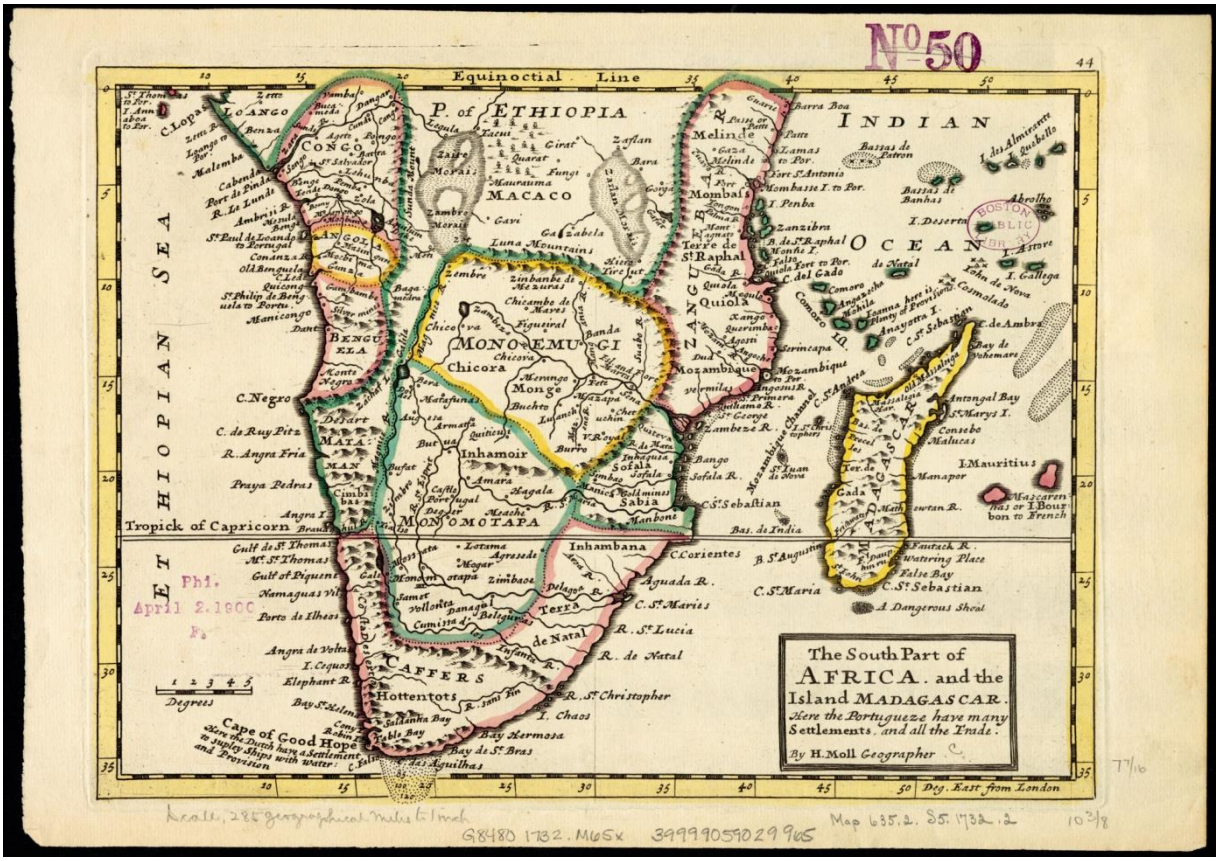

Figure 1: Moll: "The south part of Africa, and the island of Madagascar" [1732–1736] (Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library)

3 The British takeover

The Dutch period lasted until 1795, when the British began to occupy the Cape Colony, and in 1806 British rule over the Cape became final. By 1820, some 4,000 British emigrants had already settled in the Cape Colony, making up a tenth of the European population (De Villiers 2012: 93). Lord Charles Somerset, British governor of the Cape Colony from 1814 to 1826, strove for a rapid Anglicisation of the newly acquired territory and therefore banned Dutch as the language of government and as language of instruction, which was met by much resistance. He even invited Scottish Presbyterian ministers to fill the vacancies of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, the Dutch Reformed Church (De Villiers 2012: 95–96; Giliomee 2012: 220–221).

This treatment by the British, who saw the Afrikaners as second-class, led to great bitterness among the original 'Dutch' population and, together with economic motives, it resulted in the Great Trek in 1835. Thus the next two decades saw a mass migration of Dutch-speaking Voortrekkers, 'pioneers', the

Afrikaner Boers, from the Cape Colony north and eastwards in order to escape the British colonial administration. The Great Trek ended up in regions populated by peoples speaking Bantu languages.

The Great Trek resulted in the establishment of the South African Republic, ZAR, informally known as Transvaal Republic, with its capital Pretoria, in 1852, and the Orange Free State, OVS, with Bloemfontein as its capital, in 1854. In 1867, however, diamonds were discovered on the border of the British and Afrikaner spheres of influence (now Kimberley) and therefore disputed. Some twenty years later, rich gold veins were found in Witwatersrand near Johannesburg. These discoveries and their economic potential inevitably led to tensions between Dutch settlers and the British government, starting with the British annexation of the diamond fields in Basotholand (Free State) in 1871 and resulting in the Anglo Boer Wars. The first war, 1880–1881, ended in a Boer victory; the second, 1899–1902, however, left the Boers completely defeated, on the one hand because the British imprisoned the Afrikaner civilian population in concentration camps with more than 25,000 civilian casualties, and on the other because the British used a scorched-earth tactic so that all farms and other possessions of the rebellious Boers were destroyed (Giliomee 2009: 255–256).

4 The rise of Afrikaner nationalism

Clearly, this policy did not improve the relationship between the Afrikaners and the British. In addition, the policy of the British governor of the then established British Transvaal and Orange River Colony, Lord Alfred Milner, who strived for the complete Anglicisation of these hitherto formally Dutch-speaking areas, strengthened the Afrikaner nationalism (Langner and Du Plessis 2015: 9). With the help of Dutch funds, Afrikaner leaders started their own Dutch-speaking Christian schools, and in 1909 the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, the ‘South African Academy for Science and Arts’, was founded. One of its priorities was the recognition, study, improvement and quality control of Dutch and Afrikaans in South Africa. By 1908, the language war had caught fire. A young pastor of the Low German Reformed Church and also chairman of the Afrikaanse Taalvereniging, the ‘Afrikaner Language Association’, Daniël F. Malan, gave a flaming speech on 13 August of that year known as “Dit is ons erns”, ‘We are serious’, in which he called for equal rights for Afrikaans and in which he warned the English-speaking minority that the language issue was a serious problem. In this speech Malan established a direct, natural relation between language and nation, which was, incidentally, an almost generally accepted position in the 19th and early 20th centuries:

> Iedre lewende, kragtige taal word gebore op die bodem van die volkshart […]. Geen taalgeleerde kan 'n lewende taal maak nie, ewemin as wat 'n skeikundige lewe in sy laboratorium kan skep (Langner 2014: 64).[5]

Due to wise diplomatic maneuvers of the former Orange Free State President Marthinus T. Steyn and his ally James B. M. Herzog, the Closer Union Convention of 1908–1909 accepted to include two equivalent official languages in the South African constitution, English and Dutch (Giliomee 2012: 275–280). Apparently, the status of Afrikaans was not high enough and therefore preference was given to Dutch. Nevertheless, English remained the language of prestige and the animosity between the two white groups remained the main political issue. The position of black and Coloured people[6] did not play any role in the political debates of the then-formed Union of South Africa, a self-governing dominion of the British Empire.

When the Afrikaans-speaking Nasionale Party, the 'National Party', of B.M. Herzog, whose highest priority was to settle the language issue (Giliomee 2012: 282), won the elections of 1924, his coalition government introduced Afrikaans as an official language besides English and Dutch in 1925. In effect, this meant that Afrikaans took over the place of Dutch. Formally, however, Dutch still remained a national language until 1961, but the Constitution of 1983 did not mention Dutch anymore.

In 1948 the Nasionale Party could form a government of its own. Among Afrikaners, this election result was seen as the ultimate and justified victory over their British compatriots. It offered Hendrik Verwoerd, the ideologue of Apartheid, the opportunity to develop and implement its policies (Giliomee 2012: 307–309). The year 1948 is therefore generally seen as the starting point of Apartheid. In the 1970s, the 'Dutch courage' of the Afrikaner Nasionale Party government went so far as to require the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction for a number of subjects, including mathematics, for white as well as black high schools. This led to the Soweto Uprising of 1976 with approximately 600 fatalities, which became the turning point in the political situation in South Africa. The end of Apartheid came on 1 February

[5] 'Every living, powerful language is born at the bottom of the people's heart […]. No linguist can make a living language, nor can a chemist create life in his laboratory.' [All translations by Camiel Hamans.]

[6] The term 'Coloured' may be seen as offensive in some western countries, such as Britain and the United States of America. However, the term coloured does not have such a connotation in South Africa, where it is used as the standard English term for one of the four main groups that make up the population. The other groups are Blacks, Indian/Asian and Whites. See: 'South-African: (…) Used as a self-designation, and not considered offensive' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, coloured 1.3.d
https://www.oed.com/dictionary/coloured_adj?tab=meaning_and_use)

1990, when then president De Klerk released the opposition leader and later first black president of the Republic of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, from prison (Giliomee 2012: 415). Under his government a new constitution was accepted in which eleven languages are recognised as national languages, Afrikaans being one of these (Giliomee 2009: 644).

As we will see, these historical political developments are reflected in the linguistic situation and influenced it at the same time.

5 'Broken Dutch' at the Cape

The crew with which Van Riebeeck set foot on land in 1652 was not regionally homogeneous and therefore also not homogeneous with regard to language. After all, a Dutch standard language did not exist at the time. Moreover, several members of Van Riebeeck's group were German; some of them spoke Low German, whereas others spoke High German. Holland and especially Amsterdam were prosperous and economically attractive for immigrants in the 17th century and were therefore popular places to settle and to look for work. This influx of speakers without a 'Dutch' background led to a certain *koine* in 17th century Amsterdam (Boyce Hendriks 1998); a similar development must have occurred on board and at the Cape.

Kloeke (1950: 229–264) analysed in detail the origins and background of the first Europeans at the Cape. In 1664 there were 321 whites at the Cape; of those he could ascertain the origin of 264 adults. Of these 264 a number of 64 individuals came from a Low German-speaking region; the two provinces of Holland were only the cradle of a total of 58; 55 originated form the rest of the Netherlands; 24 persons were Flemish; 14 had a High German dialect as their mother tongue; 25 were of Scandinavian origin and 7 came from French-speaking areas in present-day Belgium and the North of France. Therefore the conclusion must be that the language of the first settlers was rather heterogeneous and certainly not a standardised Dutch; however, they must have had a common means of communication, most probably an adapted Dutch, a sort of *koine*.

Even though Van Riebeeck planned to teach the Khoikhoi Dutch, hoping to turn them into useful workers (Carstens & Raidt 2019: 45), this could not be put into practice. The Khoikhoi and the slaves who were imported from 1658 onwards, however, learned enough Dutch to be able to understand the language and to make themselves understood. VOC commissioner Van Rheede, who visited and inspected the Cape in 1685, noticed that the broken Dutch of the Hottentots, Khoikhoi, became so popular that there was a chance that even Dutch children would take over this pidgin, since white adults started to use this 'gobbledygook'. He preferred the colonists to try to teach the Khoikhoi 'good

Dutch' right away, which he believed they were very capable of doing, as long as they were given a good example (Hulshof 1941: 36).

The South-African linguist and archive researcher Franken came across a copy of Van Rheede's diary in Cape Town. On the basis of this information, Franken (1927) stressed the importance of the 'fornication' between sailors, VOC-employees and free whites on the one hand and Khoikhoi and slave women on the other for the development of a new language at the Cape.[7] He also concluded that a new form of Dutch emerged, a 'broken language', as Van Rheede called it, due to the contact between the different groups:

> Tussen die Europeër en Slaaf het die fisieke die Baster en die ruimer geestelike kontak, of nou nadruk gelê word op Krom-Portugees of Krom-Hollands 'n nuwe Nederduits, 'n 'gebroke spraek geskep' (Franken 1927: 38).[8]

Van Rheede visited the slave lodge and was shocked by what he saw there. Nevertheless, he noticed that the small children all spoke Dutch indiscriminately, whether they were white or black and walked around 'like wild' (Hulshof 1941: 184). It is not clear whether Van Rheede, when referring to the language of the children, meant 'proper Dutch' or 'broken Dutch'. In any case, it is evident that already in 1685 there was a group of people of mixed race at the Cape, Coloured people, and that they spoke a mixed language, most likely what was denominated 'broken Dutch', and which also became the mother tongue of the next generation.

[7] The Dutch historian Colenbrander (1902: 119), who studied the genealogy of the Afrikaner Boers and claimed that the Afrikaner Boer 'race' is of almost pure 'white' blood, had to admit that in the early days of the settlement "toen de blanke vrouwen schaarsch waren […] en de eigenaardige moreele eigenschappen van het Boerenras zich nog niet had kunnen ontwikkelen, [er] een levendig geslachtsverkeer met slavinnen plaats [had]", 'when white women were scarce [...] and the peculiar moral qualities of the Boer race had not yet developed, [there] was a lively intercourse with slave women.' Note that Colenbrander speaks without irony about 'peculiar moral qualities' of the Boers. Probably he attributed these qualities to the Boers on the basis of their 'heroic' behaviour in the recently ended Anglo-Boer War. The unequal struggle against the British had generated great sympathy for the Boers in the Netherlands and created an image of them as if they were a people of heroes of an exceptional moral level.

[8] 'The physical contact, the Baster 'bastard' [Coloured people (CH)] and the wider spiritual contact between the European and the slave created, whether this contact is emphasized as crooked-Portuguese or crooked-Dutch, a new Dutch, a 'broken language'.'

6 Language diversity in southernmost Africa

However, this 'broken Dutch' was not the only language spoken at the Cape. The official language of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) remained Dutch. Foreign VOC-employees also spoke their own mother tongues, just like the Khoikhoi still had their own language. Besides their native languages, a significant percentage of the slaves from other regions used different varieties of Portuguese Creole as their *lingua franca*, and the *lingua franca* of the slaves from the Indonesian archipelago was a form of Pasar Malay, 'Bazaar Malay'.

Bouman (1924: 123) describes how a maidservant invited the traveller C. Frikius to the castle of the Cape in 1685 or 1686 with the words "mari disini Senior!", 'come to me, Sir'. "Senior" is, of course, Portuguese *senhor*, the two other words are Malay. Bouman adds that the Afrikaner author and language activist Gideon R. von Wielligh (1859–1932) told him that his grandfather could still speak what he called Malay-Portuguese. Von Wielligh himself described 'the last sobs of Malay-Portuguese' in an Afrikaans journal in 1917 and testified there that according to his grandmother, the third wife of his grandfather, his "Oupa", 'grandpa', Nikolaas von Wielligh, who was born in the last decades of the 18th century, had learned this language from the slaves on their family farm. Gideon still remembered how Oupa used this language when talking with an old freed slave around 1865 (Hesseling 1919: 96).

What all this data confirms is that on the one hand a variety of languages was spoken at the Cape, but on the other hand there was one official language, Dutch, which maintained its status as the official language of the VOC until the British took over the Cape. Besides this language of administration and the Church, however, there were at least two, maybe three languages spoken at large at the Cape: a 'broken Dutch' and Malay Portuguese, also called Portuguese Creole, and Pasar Malay.

The Khoikhoi and people of mixed race who left the Cape during the smallpox epidemics and migrated to the north-west had given up their original language and adopted 'broken Dutch' as their mother tongue. Part of this group was called Basters, 'bastards'; another group called themselves Griquas. A form of 'broken Dutch' also became the first language of the Muslim Malay people of slave descent who stayed at the Cape (cf. Kotzé 1989 and Davids 2011), the so-called Slameiers or Slamaaiers[9] (Grebe 2009: 30 and Carstens & Raidt 2019: 210). Their vernacular was called a "kombuis-Hollands", 'kitchen Dutch', a derogatory term (Hinskens 2009: 14).

[9] The name *Slameijer* is a blend of the words *Islam* and *Maleier*, the Dutch word for inhabitants of the Malay archipelago.

The Afrikaner Boers, who moved further east and north during the Great Trek in the British era, had already pushed the boundaries in the 18th century because they were in need of land for their farms and livestock. They settled in remote areas many hours' or even days' travel away from Cape Town and did thus not stay in contact with formal Dutch except in church. Due to the vast expanse of their lands, many of them did not live close to their neighbours but isolated with their families and their slaves on their own huge farms, leaving their children with very little or even without any school education. Consequently, these Boers developed their own language variety just like the Basters and Griquas who lived in the North-West and the people, including the large group of Muslims just mentioned, who remained at the Cape but did not master and speak formal Dutch.

Roughly sketched, these developments led to three main varieties of Afrikaans: Oranjerivierafrikaans, 'Orange River Afrikaans',[10] to which Baster- and Griqua-Afrikaans belong, Kaapse Afrikaans, 'Cape-Afrikaans', which also includes the Afrikaans of the Muslim Malays, and Oostgrensafrikaans, 'Eastern Frontier-Afrikaans, also called Grensafrikaans, 'Frontier-Afrikaans', the language of the Boers. These three varieties of 'broken Dutch' differ significantly from each other (Van Rensburg 1989, 1990, 2012; Van Rensburg et al. 1997).

7 Promoting Afrikaans

With the definitive British takeover of power at the Cape in 1806, Afrikaners and their official language, Dutch, lost status. Serious efforts were made to anglicise the Cape Colony. In 1822 Dutch was replaced by English as language of politics, administration and court, and from 1853 it was no longer allowed to speak Dutch in the colonial parliament (Hinskens 2009: 13–14). As can be expected, these attempts were not received with enthusiasm by all Afrikaners. Yet it took a while before real resistance arose. British annexations of Afrikaans-speaking independent regions north of the colony and the war for independence in the Transvaal in 1880–1881 'aroused sympathy among white Dutch-speaking South Africans in the Cape for their brethren in the north. Awareness of a common language, homeland, history, and origin fostered not only group solidarity against British hegemony but an inchoate sense of ethnic identity, whereby the term *Afrikaner* came to acquire a political meaning.' (Roberge 2003: 24–25). One of the few tangible features the Dutch-speaking South Africans and their Afrikaner cousins in Transvaal and the Free State had

[10] Nowadays the Orange River is called the Gariep.

in common, besides their Calvinist religion, was the common language. Thus, the language became a political issue.

In August 1875 a group of eight young activists under the leadership of the Dutch Reformed minister Stephanus J. du Toit met in Paarl, a town 60 kilometres north-east of Cape Town, where they founded the very successful Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners, 'Society of True Afrikaners' (GRA), which in the first place aimed at promoting the use of Afrikaans as a written language and the use of Afrikaans in public domains besides advancing Afrikaner political interests (Roberge 2003: 25–26). The founding of the GRA, which soon also started its own newspaper with the significant name *Die Afrikaner Patriot*, 'The Afrikaans Patriot', marks the beginning of the *Eerste Taal Beweging*, the First (Afrikaner) Language Movement.

One of the initiators of the Language Movement, the Dutch classics teacher at the local gymnasium in Paarl and teacher of Du Toit, Arnoldus Pannevis, publicly called for a Bible translation into Afrikaans for the benefit of the Coloured people. This plea remained without success. The Afrikaans Language Movement appeared to be a white man's affair. A similar appeal for a Bible translation by Casparus Petrus Hoogenhout, principal of a school at Wellington, not far from Paarl, did lead to results. Hoogenhout's initiative, however, was intended for the white Afrikaans-speaking population 'for whom the language of the Dutch Bible also posed a significant barrier' (Roberge 2003: 25).

The special position the Afrikaans language had in the emancipatory struggle of the Afrikaners is symbolised in the striking Language Monument erected on the hills near Paarl. The first call for an Afrikaans language monument dates from 1942. In 1964, in the high days of Apartheid, a competition was held and finally the monument was built between 1972 and 1974, followed by an official unveiling attended by 40,000 invitees in 1975, one hundred years after the founding of the GRA, but a few months before the Soweto uprising.

The high opinion the African Language Movement had of their own language made them overlook two aspects that subsequently proved to be essential. This concerns the fiction of Afrikaans as a language without variation and the refusal to offer a place in the emancipation and standardisation process to the Coloured speakers of Afrikaans. This neglect was not only characteristic of the early years of the language movement, it left its mark on the pursuit of the elevation of Afrikaans. For instance, in the discussion about the symbolism embodied in the Language Monument, a group under the leadership of the original chairman of the founding committee, Reverend P.J. Loots, heavily protested against references to non-white contributions to Afrikaans. According to him they were not only unnecessary but even based on a historical lie,

(Huigen 2008: 882; Van Zyl & Rossouw 2016). In Loots' opinion and that of the media that reported about the unveiling of the monument, Afrikaans was mainly a "witmanstaal", a 'white man's language' (Huigen 2008: 889).

8 The 'deformed' Afrikaans of the Coloured people

In fact, all educated middle-class Afrikaners must have known that other varieties of Afrikaans existed besides the one spoken by themselves. However, they did not accept these varieties as part of their 'civilised' means of communication. Afrikaans-speaking bourgeois circles did not differ from their European or American peers in this respect. As Stell (2010a: 110–111) puts it, it was a Cape-Dutch intelligentsia that started the First Language Movement and they chose what they thought to be the 'unspoiled' language of the proud and brave Voortrekker Boers, Frontier-Afrikaans as a binding symbol for the white Afrikaans-speakers at the Cape; this was, however, combined with a few typical Cape-Afrikaans features to stress the distance from Dutch. After all, they saw the language of the Coloured people as 'ugly, corrupted and bastardised'. The author and language activist Von Wielligh (1925: 94) who was a *trait d'union* between the First and the Second Language Movement, which started after the less successful Second Boer War of 1899–1902, described in his survey of regional varieties of Afrikaans the Afrikaans of the Coloured speakers as 'the lowest form ever achieved by Afrikaans'. Rademeyer, who was the first to study the language of the Basters and the Griquas, called their language 'a kind of deformed Afrikaans' compared to Standaard Afrikaans. The speakers of these varieties were an "agterlike klompie wesens", a 'backward bunch of creatures', even though most of them were not illiterate (Rademeyer 1938: 5). No wonder that the GRA people believed that there was no variation in what they considered Afrikaans. Their leader Du Toit persisted that "[v]an Tafelsberg tot Soutpansberg praat die Afrikaner een taal", 'from Table Mountain to Soutpansberg the Afrikaners speak one language' (Du Toit 1891, quoted by Du Plessis 1987: 152–153). By neglecting the varieties of Afrikaans, the GRA simply disqualified the non-white varieties as a possible part of their language.

9 No dialect diversity

But the varieties within white Afrikaans were overlooked as well. The first grammarians who published about Afrikaans had kept up the delusion that Afrikaans is a language without variation:

> Dit is nog opvallend hoe die eerste taalkundiges Afrikaans feitliks sonder uitsondering as variasieloos sien. Changuion[11] (1844) self, Mansvelt (1884)[12], Viljoen (1896)[13], en ook S.J. du Toit is gesteld daarop dat Afrikaans "van die Kaap tot by die Limpopo" een taal is, sonder noemenswaardige verskeidenheid. Die hoofrede hiervoor lê m.i. daarin dat teen die einde van die vorige eeu om Afrikaans as kultuurtaal begin gaan het, en dat dit vir baie van hulle om Afrikaans as nasionale taal gesentreer het. Dit was belangrik vir hulle om Afrikaans van sy patois-etiket te bevry, want toe het dialek nog min of meer onaanvaarbare afwyking beteken.[14] (Du Plessis 1995: 145)

In 1882 Hugo Schuchardt, who was interested in Afrikaans since he expected to come across creole phenomena in Afrikaans, wrote a letter to the Dutch linguist Johannes Brill in Bloemfontein in which he asked for information about Afrikaans and the possible influence of other languages on Afrikaans. Brill's answer did not differ from what he had said in a lecture in Bloemfontein in 1875:

[11] Antoine N.E. Changuion was a Dutch linguist who taught classics and Dutch literature at the South African Athenaeum, now University of Cape Town. In 1844, he published *De Nederduitsche taal in Zuid-Afrika hersteld, zijnde eene handleiding tot de kennis dier taal, naar de plaatselijke behoefte van het land gewijzigd*, 'The Dutch language restored in South Africa, being a manual to the knowledge of this language, adapted to the local needs of the country.' In fact, this is the first published study on Afrikaans, and therefore Changuion is seen as the first grammarian of Afrikaans (Pheiffer 1979; Noordegraaf 2003).

[12] Nicolaas Mansvelt was a Dutch teacher and pedagogue who worked in South Africa and published the first Afrikaans dictionary in 1884 (Besselaar 1934). It should be noted that Mansvelt's *Proeve van een Kaaps-Hollandsch Idioticon* (1884) was published in Dutch and only provides data which differ from Dutch.

[13] Willem J. Viljoen was an Afrikaans linguist and language activist who taught at Victoria College Stellenbosch and who defended his PhD dissertation on the history of Afrikaans at the then German-speaking Strasbourg University in 1896.

[14] 'It is still striking how the first linguists, in fact without exception, saw Afrikaans as a language without variation. Changuion (1844) himself, Mansvelt (1884), Viljoen (1896), and also S.J. du Toit are of the opinion that Afrikaans "from the Cape to the Limpopo" is one language, without significant variety. In my opinion, the main reason for this lies in the fact that by the end of the last century Afrikaans had begun to be a standard language, and for many of them it had centered on Afrikaans as a national language. It was important for them to free Afrikaans from its patois-label, because then dialect still meant more or less unacceptable deviation.'

> Im ganzen Süd-Afrika wird – mit Ausnahme der grösseren Städte und des östlichen Theils der Kapkolonie und Natal – nur eine Sprache gesprochen: das sogen. Kap-Holländisch.[15] (quoted in Noordegraaf 2004: 173)

However, he admits that there may be some "kleine dialektischen [sic] Eigenthümlichkeiten", 'small dialectal peculiarities',

> z.B. das Holländische wie es in der Umgegend der Kapstad gesprochen wird, mag von der Sprache der Transvaalschen Bauern in einigen Hinsichten verschieden sein […] diese Verschiedenheiten sind in allgemeinen [sic] genommen ganz unbedeutend und wohin man kommt wird man ohne Mühe andere verstehen können und selbst von ihnen verstanden werden (quoted in Noordegraaf 2004: 173).[16]

It took until the 1980s and the work of Christo van Rensburg before the obsession of Afrikaans as a homogeneous language was given up.[17] Until then, the idea remained alive that Afrikaans was 'a God-given emblem of the Afrikaner people that could be stipulated *a priori* (as opposed to a segment along a continuum of lects)' (Roberge 2002: 26). With this idée fixe, the GRA put Afrikaans on the 'market' (Roberge 2002: 26). In other words, Afrikaans was considered the linguistic mirror of the unified soul of white Afrikanerdom.

10 Standardisation of Afrikaans

The Standard Afrikaans we know today developed roughly in the first quarter of the 20th century (Roberge 2003: 31); the norm, however, was created artificially in the 19th century:

> [T]he standardization efforts of the first language society [GRA (CH)] drew on the well-known imitations of Cape Dutch Vernacular speech which had been popularized in the Cape dialect literature from the 1830s. The Cape dialect writing tradition is best understood as a type of 'variety

[15] 'In the whole of South Africa – with the exception of the larger cities and the eastern part of the Cape Colony and Natal – only one language is spoken: the so-called Cape Dutch.'

[16] For example, Dutch as it is spoken in the vicinity of Cape Town may be different from the language of the Transvaal farmers in some respects [...] these differences are generally quite insignificant and wherever you come you will be able to understand others without any effort and even be understood by them.

[17] The work of the pioneer dialect geographer Stephanus A. Louw, who published an atlas of Afrikaans, *Afrikaanse Taalatlas*, in 1959, focuses on the dialectal differences between Dutch and Afrikaans.

> imitation' […], that is out-group members (i.e. well-educated journalists and other middle class writers) imitate the marked linguistic behaviour of another social group (i.e. the language use of rural Cape farmers and artisans). Dialect imitations typically involve the overgeneralization of otherwise rare and variable linguistic features. […] Gradually Cape Dutch writers created a relatively uniform representation of the 'vernacular' as an amalgamation of different non-standard features which did not necessarily coexist […] in the speech of any individual, but which endowed the texts with the stereotypical characteristics of local speech and helped to establish a typological model of what constituted 'Afrikaans'. The process of creating a unified representation of the local vernacular was continued by the first language society when formulating the linguistic rules of the new standard – rules which defined Afrikaans as a uniform linguistic diasystem in its own right, independent of Dutch. (Deumert 2002: 6)

A standard language can grow from one source variety, but it is just as possible that more varieties form the basis for the new standard. Afrikaans is a product of the second category. Deumert (2004) shows that standard Afrikaans was composed by 'language entrepreneurs' (Grebe 2009: 21)[18] on the basis of phenomena from different varieties. In addition, Deumert (2004) concluded through an accurate analysis of private Cape Dutch documents from the last decades of the 19th and the first of the 20th century that the upcoming 'standard' language used at the turn of the 19th and 20th century varied widely. As her sources demonstrate, a dynamic continuum of sociolects existed until at least 1900. Therefore, it is better to speak of a (dia)lect continuum from which the language entrepreneurs drew to construct standard Afrikaans, rather than of one sociolect or dialect that formed the basis of the new standard language. In this continuum 'the speech of individuals took on Cape Dutch features or avoided them to varying degrees' (Roberge 1994: 156). However, as much as this continuum involves variation, it exclusively included white variation. Varieties spoken by non-white speakers were not included.

[18] This is how Grebe (2009) called the members of the GRA who not only constructed a standard Afrikaans from different elements but also used this standard language for emancipatory, political purposes.

11 'Corrupted Dutch'

This emphasis on the exclusive white character of Afrikaans is in fact a form of appropriation, as Webb & Kriel (2000: 22) argue:

> An ironic aspect of the Afrikaans language movement(s) was that language was so totally appropriated by its white speakers: what was initially a language of the nonelite, the working class, black people, brown people, and uneducated white people, came to be regarded as the "exclusive" property of the white "elite" (despite, of course, of the fact that more than half of its speakers were not white).

There are no exact data on the number of Afrikaans-speakers in the late 19th century, and even less on the white to non-white ratio among them, but if we now note that the total number of Afrikaans-speakers in South Africa is almost seven million and that only 40% of them are white (Alexander 2023), and even if the population increase of Khoikhoi among non-white speakers may be faster than among white Afrikaners, it is still not unlikely to estimate that the white share among Afrikaans-speakers did not exceed half of the total number at the time of the GRA. Even though the white and non-white population belonged to very different social classes, it is impossible that the white language entrepreneurs of the GRA were unaware of the Afrikaans language use by non-whites. The different groups did not live in isolation from each other. Moreover, 'broken Dutch' or Cape Dutch had already been in common use for decades when the language pioneers of the GRA started their activities:

> The use of Cape Dutch as a vehicle for verbal and written communication by the slaves and Free Blacks in Cape Town during the early years of the nineteenth century is evident from a report in the *Cape of Good Hope Literary Gazette* in 1830. The *Literary Gazette* reports that when an Englishman, V.T. Robertson, tried to print his English translation of the *Hidayutool Islaam* [Divine guidance of Islam] in 1830, he had to consider a version in the "Dutch tongue for the benefit of the Malay Moslims [sic] throughout the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope" (Davids 2011: 63).

This creolised form of Dutch, Cape Dutch Vernacular, came to be predominantly spoken by the slaves, the Khoikhoi, the Free Blacks and the lower class white population in Cape Town at the beginning of the 19th century, whereas "the upper classes in Cape Town tried to keep their Dutch to conform as closely as possible to the Dutch in Holland" (Davids 1990: 46), in which they

were not very successful, since their language appeared to be heavily influenced by that of the Cape Dutch-speaking majority.

This 'corruption' did not go unnoticed. The aforementioned linguist Antoine Changuion, a Dutch professor of classics at the South African Athenaeum, published a book *De Nederduitsche Taal in Zuid-Afrika hersteld* (The Dutch Language Restored in South Africa) in 1844. Among the words and expressions that should be corrected according to Changuion, one finds several examples that continue to exist as colloquialisms among Coloured Afrikaans-speakers in the Cape Peninsula (Davids 1990: 44–45). Creolised Dutch was not only spoken at the Cape but also by slaves on the farms outside Cape Town. Since the children of the white farmers who often lived far from villages and towns were raised by slaves, they learned a form of creolised Dutch from an early age. This is why the creolised Dutch of the rural areas exhibits a "stronger tendency towards the general Creole" than Cape Dutch (Davids 1990: 46).

12 Arabic-Afrikaans

Many of the slaves and of the political exiles from the Dutch eastern colonies were Muslims. A large part of the Muslim population lived at the Cape. By 1842 Cape Muslims constituted a third of the overall population of the Cape (Davids 2011: 36). Due to religious reasons, the ability to write the Arabic script was widespread among them (Davids 2011: 75–84). From 1830 onwards it became very common among Cape Muslims to record texts in their native language, Cape Dutch or perhaps better, Cape Muslim Afrikaans, which they did in the script they knew, Arabic script. This variety is called Arabic-Afrikaans. The oldest surviving manuscripts date from 1845. The oldest known printed text, *Bayān al-Dīn*, a religious text by Abu Bakr Effendi, was written in 1869 and printed in Constantinopel eight years later (Davids 2011: 89, 115). *Bayān al-Dīn* appeared on the market only 16 years after the first printed book in Afrikaans *Zamenspraak tussen Klaas Waarzegger en Jan Twyfelaar*, 'Conversation between Nicholas Truthsayer and John Doubter', by Louis Henri Meurant, a political dialogue about a possible secession of the eastern provinces. The Arabic-Afrikaans writing tradition lasted for almost a century until about 1920.

Although Arabic-Afrikaans texts must have been well known, the Cape Muslim Afrikaans in which these texts were written was not taken into account in the standardisation process. The language of the former Muslim slaves remained a non-standard variety:

> It is generally taken for granted that the variety of Afrikaans used in the Arabic-Afrikaans documents is "pure" Afrikaans, not contaminated by Standard Dutch, because, unlike other inhabitants of the colony, Muslims

> did not have a natural connection with that language. Dutch remained the language of the (White) schools and official publications until 1925, and Muslims are assumed to have been immune to its influence. Such a view may not be entirely accurate because a growing number of Muslims acquired at least some knowledge of Dutch. The fact remains, however, that the language in which they wrote was a non-standard variety at that time (Versteegh 2015: 286).

13 Further non-white varieties

The Muslims at the Cape were not the only community of faith that used Afrikaans in religious matters and in daily life. Already in the 18th century Moravian Brethren[19] were the first to begin their missionary work in what is now the Western Cape Province. They settled in Genadendal, literally, 'valley of grace', as the place was called from 1806 onwards. The mother tongue of the inhabitants of the mission station is called Genadendal-Dutch, although it would be better called Genadendal-Afrikaans. The Moravian Brethren had a printing press at their disposal very early on, with which they printed texts in Afrikaans because they broke the bond with Dutch as early as 1816, almost sixty years before the GRA did this (Titus 2016: 189).

Due to the distance between the Muslim community and the white protestant population, it would not have been impossible for the religious life of the Muslim community to have escaped the attention of the African elite, but for Churches of the Coloured population this was impossible. Initially, white and non-white Christians joined the same reformed Church. A synod decision from 1857 put an end to this, leading to Church apartheid, long before there was political apartheid (Nel 2016: 65, Plaatjies-Van Huffel 2016: 73–74). Despite the important place that Genadendal-Dutch played in the natural development of Afrikaans, this variety was also ignored in the standardisation process.

Genadendal-Dutch shared this fate with all non-white varieties of Afrikaans, although some of these varieties were considered "the best representatives of Cape Dutch" by Dutch missionary, later teacher, Hubertus Elffers in 1900:

> Perhaps the best representatives of Cape Dutch [Cape Afrikaans (AD)] are to be found among the Malay population of the Cape Peninsula, whose worship is conducted in a foreign tongue, and the Bastards [Basters CH]

[19] The Moravian Brethren is one of the oldest protestant denominations in Christianity; it dates back to the 15th century and started in Bohemia (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2024).

> born and bred at German missions stations where Cape Dutch forms the only medium of expression. (Davids 2011: 86–87)

The standardisation of Afrikaans took place roughly between 1850 and 1930, according to Den Besten (in Van der Wouden 2012: 272). The starting point was an Afrikaans *koine* with dialectal variation and the result standard Afrikaans plus nonstandard dialects. As already mentioned above, we know from Van Rensburg's studies (1989, 1990 and 2012) that this dialect variation has led to three distinct dialect groups: Orange River Afrikaans, Cape Afrikaans, to which Arabic-Afrikaans belongs, and Eastern Frontier Afrikaans, the language of the white Voortrekkers, the Boers who left the British Cape Colony after 1834 and who founded their independent Afrikaans-speaking republics, Orange Free State and Transvaal. In the two first dialect groups, Coloured people were richly represented, if not in the majority. The last dialect, Eastern Frontier Afrikaans, formed the basis for standard Afrikaans (Groenewald 2019: 19), although combined with several Cape-Afrikaans features to mark the distance to Dutch (Stell 2010a: 110–111). The other dialects were marginalised, just like their speakers:

> Whether known as 'Cape Dutch', 'Cape Malay', 'Hotnotstaal', 'Hottentots-Hollands', 'Kitchen-Dutch', 'mongrel Dutch' or 'Afrikaa', this creole language, spoken by the peasants, the urban proletariat whatever their ethnic background and even the middle class of civil servants, traders and teachers, was derided by the upper classes of the Cape Colony, be they Dutch or English-speaking, in the nineteenth century. The opinion of Chief Justice Lord J.H. de Villiers […] was that this language was 'poor in the number of its words, weak in its inflections, wanting in accuracy of meaning'. Such opinions were representative of views that speech and intelligence were somehow connected, and that Cape Dutch was thought to be 'incapable of expressing ideas connected with the higher spheres of thought'. (Willemse 2015: 3–4)

As far as attention was paid to the non-white varieties of Afrikaans, as for instance by Rademeyer in his 1938 dissertation about the language of the Griquas and Rehoboth-basters, it was done with disdain. Their language had not been thoroughly studied, he noted; it was only there to amuse us. After all, Coloured people expressed themselves comically (Rademeyer 1938: 11–12).

It is no wonder that Stephanus J. du Toit could claim in 1874 that 'Afrikaans is 'n witmanstaal, 'n suiwer Germaanse taal, een van suiwerheid,

eenvoudigheid, bondigheid en kragtigheid' (Willemse 2019: 3).[20] The variety to which this language went back, was, according to Du Plessis Scholtz, the great Afrikaans philologist of the 20th century, the language of the colonists or the language of the 'burghers', the bourgeoisie (Groenewald 2019: 13).

14 The genesis of Afrikaans

The idea that Afrikaans was a white language – and that there was therefore no need to look at the non-white varieties during the process of standardisation – was greatly strengthened by the scholarly polemic about the origin of Afrikaans (Willemse 2015: 5, Groenewald 2019: 2–3). In 1897 Hesseling, a Dutch specialist in Byzantine and New Greek, published the article "Het Hollandsch in Zuid-Afrika", 'Dutch in South Africa' (Hesseling 1897) which became the first of many studies by him on the origins of Afrikaans. In his own field, he had wondered how it was possible that Modern Greek had developed from classical Attic Greek. Was this a matter of a spontaneous, natural development from this one dialect or had other languages exerted their influence? He came to believe that this change from classical Greek to modern Greek could only be explained by assuming influences from other languages. He proposed a kind of creolistic explanation.

Hesseling realised that the change from Dutch to Afrikaans was of a similar nature. In his view, Afrikaans is a mixed language, a creolised Dutch. The language which had influenced Dutch was what he called Malayo-Portuguese, a Portuguese-based creole spoken by slaves from other regions. Modern theories do no longer accept an influence from a Portuguese-based creole only (Den Besten 2009) but still follow Hesseling's main idea that Afrikaans is a product of (partial) creolisation.

However, Hesseling's explanation that Afrikaans was a mixture of Dutch and another language was not warmly received at the Cape. In 1916 Bosman defended his doctoral dissertation *Afrikaans en Maleis-Portugees*, 'Afrikaans and Malayo-Portuguese', in which he scrutinised and rejected Hesseling's theory. According to Bosman, the changes Dutch had undergone in South Africa are the result of the poor language use by L2 Afrikaans-speakers. This L2 group consisted of Germans, French, Khoikhoi and slaves. In an expanded version of his dissertation, Bosman even went so far as to rule out the possibility that white Afrikaners would ever have adopted language or linguistic phenomena from their slaves, since white people are aware of their superiority (Bosman 1923: 62). He called non-white varieties of Afrikaans "Kaffir, Hottentots and Malay

[20] 'Afrikaans is a white man's language, a pure Germanic language, one of purity, simplicity, brevity and power.'

Afrikaans" (quoted in Groenewald 2019: 7), which should not be identified with 'pure Afrikaans'. The debate did not end there, but continued into the 1980s, with different protagonists, but with similar positions.[21]

Within South Africa, the dominant position in this polemic remained that Afrikaans was a pure Germanic language that had developed directly from Dutch without influences from indigenous or slave languages. Therefore, there was no need to study these indigenous languages or the languages of the slaves, nor to investigate the African varieties spoken by these groups or to include them in the standardisation process associated with developing a standard language. In addition,

> the advancement of Afrikaans in the 20th century, mostly under the aegis of Afrikaner nationalism, meant that the other constituent histories and stories of the language and its speakers were either neglected or suppressed (Willemse 2015: 7).

The conclusion that follows from this overview of the circumstances in which Afrikaans was standardised is inescapable:

> Niet-blanke variëteiten zijn nooit zichtbaar gebruikt voor de Standaardafrikaanse norm […].[22] (Stell 2010b: 419)

This one-sided, politically and emancipatory-motivated emphasis has led to the construction of an idealised homogeneous standard language.

15 Afterplay: Kaaps

Fortunately, history has not stopped and Apartheid came to an end in 1990. Consequently, the fixation on whiteness in culture and language also decreased. As a result, attention slowly arose for other varieties of Afrikaans. From 2010 onwards, most of the emphasis came to be on Kaaps which is the name the poet-philosopher Adam Small coined in 1973 (Staphorst 2023: 27) for Cape-Afrikaans, or Coloured or Black Afrikaans, formerly called Kombuis Afrikaans 'kitchen Afrikaans'. Kaaps is "the variety of Afrikaans mostly associated with urban Black[23] speakers in Cape Town, and which has, therefore, also been described as a working class vernacular" (Staphorst 2023: 26). The movement for the recognition of Kaaps came a century too late to have an influence on the

[21] For an extensive discussion of this debate see Hamans (2021, 2024).
[22] 'Non-white varieties have never been visibly used for the Standard African standard.'
[23] It is now not unusual to call all non-white speakers of Afrikaans Black speakers.

construction of the standard language.[24] However, since Afrikaans is under pressure as the language of the former oppressor, interest focuses on the hitherto ignored variety. This is especially true because this language can be described as a Black language or of Coloured people. Where Afrikaans may be threatened, Kaaps may be able to offer salvation (Williams 2021). Especially since the language, which can be seen as a non-standard and informal variety of Afrikaans with a strong influence of English (Hendricks 2016: 4), is rather popular in poetry, slam and hip hop (Williams 2017). Empowerment of Kaaps may break through the *idée fixe* of the homogeneity of Afrikaans. Its increasing importance is also shown in that a team led by Quentin Williams, director of the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR) at the University of the Western Cape, is preparing a Trilingual Dictionary of Kaaps, English and Afrikaans, TDK.[25]

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[24] Kotzé (2016: 48) is of a different opinion, namely that "Kaaps (also known as Cape Afrikaans), could be regarded as the matrilect of Afrikaans, before (with a view to standardisation for the formal functions of the language) large-scale relexification from Dutch was instituted."

[25] Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR) [2024 in preparation].

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Contact information:

Camiel Hamans
University of Amsterdam
Adam Mickiewicz University
hamans[at]telfort.nl