

(Lexico-)Grammatical innovation in the NWU-Kommentaarkorpus

In this talk, I will illustrate the potential of the NWU-Kommentaarkorpus that is available in the “exclusive” part of the VivA corpus portal (VivA 2021) for research into (lexico-)grammatical innovation in Afrikaans. The NWU-Kommentaarkorpus is a collection of unedited user comments from two (anonymized) popular Afrikaans-language news and discussion websites and as such offers a unique view of present-day colloquial Afrikaans, which, as Ponelis (1999) already observed, is in some respects a quite different cluster of varieties from written Standard Afrikaans. I will focus on three different grammatical phenomena that are either recent innovations or are subject to ongoing change, viz. (i) indirect object passives (see the bold part of 1 for an example from the corpus), (ii) new argument structure constructions with *in* ... (*in*) ‘into’ or *uit* ... (*uit*) ‘out of’ (see 2a and 2b respectively) and (iii) fake object constructions such as the Afrikaans version of the “V hell out of N” construction (e.g. Perek 2016) illustrated in (3). In all cases, a comparison of data culled from the Taalkommissiekorpus with data from the NWU Kommentaarkorpus will testify to the creativity of the colloquial language.

- (1) Moet sê **as ek iets beloof is** en minder kry sal ek ook ontevrede wees.
‘Have to say, if I’m promised something and get less, I will be unhappy as well.’
- (2) a. Die prostitute [is] **meisies wat in slawerny in gemanipuleer is**.
‘The prostitutes are girls that have been manipulated into slavery.’
b. Dan swendel die sangoma nog duisende rande uit die armes!
‘And on top of that, the sangoma frauds the poor out of thousands of rands.’
- (3) Aaarrgggh sulke goed frustreer die blou bol uit my uit.
‘Aaargh, stuff like that is frustrating (literally:) the blue ball out of me.’

References

- Perek, Florent. 2016. Using distributional semantics to study syntactic productivity in diachrony: A case study. *Linguistics*, 54, 149-188.
- Ponelis, Fritz. 1999. Afrikaans-English Codeswitching and Convergence. *Language Matters*, 30, 157-170.
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