Afrikaans in a quantitative typology of Germanic standard and non-standard varieties

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Besides English, Afrikaans is considered "the [Germanic] language which deviates grammatically the farthest from the others" (Harbert 2007: 17). But how exactly do we measure "grammatical deviation", and how deviant is Afrikaans really if we compare it not just to other standard languages but also to non-standard varieties of Germanic? The present contribution aims to address those questions by bringing together two perspectives:

- Functional typology, which focuses on the variation between standard varieties with a focus on subsystems (cf. e.g. Dahl 2000 on future tense). A high level of abstraction is deliberately chosen for this; similarities and differences are assessed from a purely functional perspective.
- Quantitative dialectology or dialectometry, which yields a microtypological classification of non-standard varieties of a single language (e.g. Lameli 2013 for the German speaking area). The procedure here is based on raw data on the basis of formal differences (see e.g. Kehrein 2009).

The combination of both perspectives, i.e. a functional-typological analysis of both standard and non-standard varieties of Germanic, beyond individual language boundaries, seems to remain a desideratum – and it appears particularly fruitful for the study of Afrikaans, whose status among the Germanic varieties has been discussed for most of its existence, with preconceptions about its origin often obstructing an objective assessment. Using purely quantitative means and both standard and non-standard varieties for comparison, an objectified perspective on Afrikaans should be feasible.

For this, we first discuss the selection of phenomena and data, evaluate different quantitative procedures and present ways of visualizing and interpreting the corresponding results. The findings contribute to locating the typological position of Afrikaans among the Germanic standard and non-standard varieties while at the same time evaluating two methodologically distinct approaches to typology in closely related varieties.

Bibliography

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