

What constitutes evidence for substrate (or: adstrate) influences in Afrikaans?

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Ever since Hugo Schuchardt and Derk Christiaan Hesseling published their ideas on substrate (or adstrate) features in Afrikaans it has been customary – at least among contact linguistics-inclined researchers – to ascribe ‘un-Dutch’ features of Afrikaans to substrate/adstrate [henceforth: substrate] influences. This practice – of which I plead guilty as well – could hardly be put the brake on due to the weaknesses of the opposite, dialect-oriented practice of the South African philologists.

To give one example of the latter practice: the structure of afr. *hierdie* ‘this, these’ and *daardie* ‘that, those’ [literally ‘here-the/that’ and ‘there-the/that’ respectively] instead of the expected forms **die-hier*, **die-daar* can hardly be considered to be ‘explained’ by simple reference to swabian *der da Stuhl* ‘that there chair (or similar forms in Swedish; cf. Raidt (1983) for Swabian). Referring to *daar*, *die stoel* ‘there, that chair’ in colloquial and dialectal Dutch (Pauwels 1959) hardly fares any better, since – unlike *hierdie/daardie* in Afrikaans – this is a sentence-initial phenomenon while *daar* and *die stoel* can be shown to be two separate constituents (both on prosodic and on syntactic grounds).

However, a contact linguistics-inclined alternative which appeals to the structure of Afrikaans compounds and to the universal semantics of demonstratives and demonstrative locatives (den Besten 1988), can equally be criticized in that (a) **die-hier*, **die-daar* would have been less costly than *hier-die*, *daar-die*, (b) none of the substrate languages demonstrates this Locative+Demonstrative structure (with the exception of one song (!) in Sri Lankan Creole Portuguese), (c) du. *dese* ‘this,, these’ can be found until late in the 19th century and is preserved in frozen expressions like *vandeemaand* ‘this month’ and *duskant* ‘[on] this side [of]’, and (d) du. *die* ‘that, those’ has retained part of its old properties but can now also mean ‘this, these’ (while du. *dit* ‘this’ seems to have changed places with du. *dat* ‘that’). – Similar critical remarks can be made as regards the theory of sentential word order and/or the theory of possessive structures.

In my talk I will discuss one or two of the above-mentioned problem areas from the point of view of “gene pool theory”. I will claim that Cape Dutch Pidgin has been an independent ‘gene-provider’, on a par with the substrates that are traditionally distinguished for Afrikaans (Khoekhoe, Asian Creole Portuguese, Bazaar Malay).