

On the core significance of the periphery: an Afrikaans case study

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The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the distinctive character of the peripheral structural domains in modern-day spoken varieties of Afrikaans. More specifically, I will focus on the CP-, vP and DP periphery, each of which exhibits properties that differentiate the relevant Afrikaans systems from the rest of Germanic, including its closest relatives. The empirical phenomena at the heart of the discussion will be:

(i) AFRIKAANS NEGATION, particularly the innovated clause-final negation element (*nie*₂ in (1)), and the likewise innovated negative imperative marker, *moenie* ('must.not' ≈ "don't") as in (2):

(1) *Dit is nie*₁ *so eenvoudig nie*₂.
it is not so simple POL
'It is not so simple.'

(2) *Moenie moed verloor nie!*
must.not courage lose POL
'Don't give up!'

(ii) VIR-MARKED NOMINALS, which serve a number of functions associated with (non-core) datives in other systems, including differential object marking (DOM) (3) - unknown in Germanic, outside of (some) Bavarian varieties - and perspectival applicatives (4):

(3) *Sy was (vir) die hond.*
she wash for the dog
'She washes the dog.'

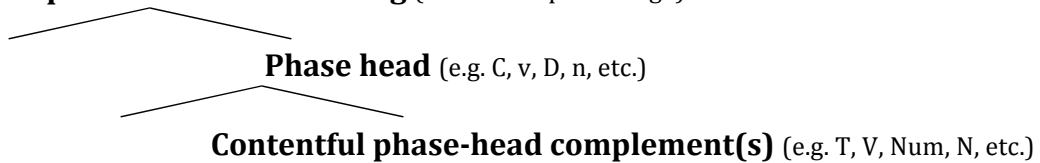
(4) *Hy rook vir hom 'n sigaretjie.*
he smoke for him a cigarette.DIM
'He smokes himself a cigarette.'

We will consider the peculiar properties associated with these phenomena, and some of their knock-on consequences - some of which, ironically, reinforce aspects of Afrikaans' Germanic character, while others reshape it. I will suggest that all of the peripheral developments we have considered, and others that fall beyond the scope of the talk, can be understood as the consequence of the way in which natural-language grammars encode speaker-hearer-oriented perspective, something which is particularly evident when we study vernacular varieties. More specifically, I will propose the hypothesis in (5), which, simplifying grossly, entails the putatively universal (fractal) design template in (6):

(5) **The Peripheral Speaker-Hearer Hypothesis (PSHH)**

Speaker-hearer perspective is formally encoded at the edges of phasal domains, where phasal domains are independently signalled, realizationally (PF) and interpretively (LF) privileged structural domains, the precise identity of which differs from language to language, and the “size” of which may also differ from derivation to derivation language-internally (cf. the ‘dynamic’ perspective on phases).

(6) **Speaker-Hearer encoding** (outermost phase edge)



The claim, then, will be (i) that numerous significant formal differences between modern spoken Afrikaans varieties and the rest of Germanic - not all of which are at first sight equally evident - have their origin in Afrikaans’s roots and subsequent development as a vernacular system employed in a complex sociolinguistic environment, and (ii) that modern generative syntax is well placed to formalise and deepen our understanding of how “pragmaticalisation” and “intersubjectification” phenomena can affect “core” grammar.