

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Purism

5.1 The reasons for purism

A desire to preserve the "purity" of the language is common to most communities where the language is perceived to be under threat, at least as far as the standard languages of the western world are concerned. Icelandic is one such example where, although English is not the mother tongue of any of its indigenous population, the Icelanders are so few in number and so close to North America that they apparently fear for the survival of their language. They are fervently proud of their Viking past and the antiquity of their language. The Jews of Israel are another example of a people with a long tradition and a language that is integral to their relatively new identity as Israelis. Hebrew was of course for quite some time in the unique position that it was not the mother tongue of anyone who spoke it, which possibly made the need for purism all the more urgent. These are but two examples of peoples and languages that continue to survive in circumstances that in some respects resemble those with which Afrikaans has to contend. Above all, in South Africa the language has been closely associated with the emancipation of the Afrikaner and his struggle to attain complete economic and political parity with his English speaking compatriots:¹

"Wanneer men spreekt van 'onzuiverheid', van 'besmetting', dan schuilt daarachter meestal een afkeer van de vreemde natie, als gevolg van historiese herinneringen of politieke bedoelingen of gevoeligheden... We [kunnen] dan het purisme een begeleidingsverschijnsel noemen van groeiend zelfbesef, van politieke ontvoogding." (De Vooy 1925:18-19)

Visagie (*Die Brandwag*, 27/9/46) even goes so far as to see the struggle to purify Afrikaans and retain that purity as a third language movement:

"Waar die Eerste en die Tweede Taalbewegings hoofsaaklik op die erkenning van Afrikaans toegespits was, daar wil die Derde Taalbeweging die Dietse karakter van ons taal onge-

¹ This symbiosis of goals also explains why the Coloured population was excluded from all deliberations on Afrikaans; the Afrikaner completely appropriated the language during his struggle for emancipation.

skonde bewaar en ontwikkel. Hierdie beweging is dus 'n puristiese beweging, met suiwer Afrikaans as slagspreuk."²

Protecting the purity of his language from English influence is not entirely unconnected with the Afrikaner's desire to protect the purity of the White race in South Africa. Since the abolition of section 16 of the Immorality Act, the latter may in the course of time prove to be the failure the former has already shown itself to be, but this is not to say the Afrikaner has not been successful in stemming the tide in both instances. Coalescence of the English and Afrikaans cultures, the product of the inseparability of the two peoples that has been consolidated this century, finds a counterreaction in the attitude of Afrikaners to their language and provides support for puristic tendencies in the speech community; as Coetzee (1939:35) suggests

"... die enigste teken van die ander geaardheid van ons strewing en opvattings, is dikwels slegs die suiwerheid van ons taal."

Purism has had, and still has, many supporters in South Africa, but unfortunately many of them have done more harm than good because of well intended ignorance. This prompted Odendal (1973:77), in his discussion on "die norm van suiwerheid" to state:

"Die goeie taalkundige sal nie, soos reeds so dikwels gebeur het, wendinge en woorde vir Anglisismes aansien terwyl hul suiwer Diets is nie, soos 'die trein mis' of 'uitvind waar iemand woon' (en dan in eersgenoemde se plek die onafrikaanse verpas stel). Hy sal ook nie in elke Romaanse vorm wat in Afrikaans opgeneem word, soos eksellensie, evokasie, teologie, opinie, telefoon en televisie, 'n Engelse woord sien en dit dus probeer verban nie, maar hy sal die nodige kennis hê om te weet dat sulke vorme òf deur Nederlands na ons gekom het, òf internasionaal is. (Hy sal dus ook nie, soos so baie skoolgrammatikas, probeer om hul te vervang deur die 'suiwer Afrikaanse vorm' nie. Maar die taalkundige sal natuurlik ook die nodige kennis hê om te weet dat nie alle Romaanse vorme kritiekloos oorgeneem kan word nie, dat sommige wel deeglik Engelse invloed weerspieël.)"

He then comments:

² It is interesting to note in this context that the word Diets is seldom used in Holland these days because of the National Socialist connotations it acquired under German occupation; the Germans of that era were also keen language purifiers.

"... dit is jammer dat die taalkundige nie meer dikwels die rol van taalpuris op hom geneem het, en gevolglik die veld vry gelaat het aan die onkundige, negatiewe kwasie-taalkundige."

The same complaint was made by De Vooy (1925:71) with reference to Dutch in 1925:

"De Duitse en Engelse taalinvloeden zijn nog niet voldoende onderzocht. Germanismen en Anglicismen trokken meer de aandacht van taalzuiveraars dan van taalgeleerden."

Little has changed since, even in Holland.

Combrink (1984:99) says of linguistic purism:

"Teoreties-taalwetenskaplik is daar geen rede hoegenaamd waarom mens purisme kan aanbeveel nie. Die hoofdoel van taalgebruik is immers kommunikasie, nie die gebruik van suiwer taal nie."

Combrink is but one of many who have laboured this point; nevertheless, purism exists and feelings towards it often run very high. Purity of language, but then chiefly in vocabulary because the common man is usually unable to recognise any other form of interference, is often regarded in South Africa as an admirable virtue of which one can be proud. In fact "suiwerheid" is even regarded as a demigod in some circles, as the following statement indicates:

"Inderdaad kan ons sê dat... purisme... daarvoor gesorg het dat Afrikaans in sy woordeskat en die aanwending daarvan, die suiwerste Dietse taal gebly het." (Hiemstra 1963:8)

Such exaggerated ideas of the importance of linguistic purity – after all, what is absolute purity in language anyway? – are described by Aitchison (1981:26) as follows:

"In brief, the puristic attitude towards language the idea that there is an absolute standard of correctness which should be maintained has its origin in a natural nostalgic tendency in man, supplemented and intensified by social pressures. It is illogical, and impossible to pin down to any firm base."

De Villiers (*Die Huisgenoot*, 18/11/49) describes the Afrikaner's attitude to purism in these terms:

"... dit gaan hier om die taal as kenteken van die volk, dws. elke Engelse woord kan beskou word as 'n vlaggie van Engelseheid eerder as 'n simbool of naam vir 'n bepaalde begrip of ding. Vandaar die emosionele houding teenoor die saak."

He admits, however, that the ultimate decision lies with the speech community, not academics:

"Dit is vir die gewone sprekers om te besluit of hulle vir hulle wil skrap sit teen die indringing van buite en of hulle die vreemde element as buit wil beskou."

His opinion is a sensible one where he states:

"... die stryd vir die suiwerheid van ons taal hang saam met 'n nasionale strewe wat ek nóg wil ontken nóg kritiseer."

5.2 The success of puristic endeavours in Afrikaans

Nienaber (1940:62), in his discussion of the vocabulary used in *Klaas Waarzegger se zamenspraak en briewe uit 1861*, remarks

"Ook merk ons hoe woorde uit die parlementêre kringe in Afrikaans net begin inburger, en ander oor die administrasie van die land reeds 'n plek verower het – almal via Engels (Parlement[s], spiets, bill, wharfage, Juts[ie], gofferneur e.m.)."

Loanwords of this kind and vintage are mentioned time and time again in the literature on anglicisms in Afrikaans, and more often than not the very same examples are given. De Villiers (1976:127) comments:

"Die oudste Engelse leenwoorde is volkome verafrikaans bv. juts (judge), koort (court), bokkie (buggy), briek (brake), reisies (races), metjies (matches), setlaar (settler), spiets (speech). (Dit is opvallend dat hierdie ou leenwoorde so sterk in status gedaal het, dat sommige van hulle vandag in opgevoede kringe onbekend is.)"

His final comment is an indication that English loanwords, although once considered completely *ingeburger* and possibly even indispensable, do not necessarily come to stay.³ Le Roux, for example, wrote in *Die Taalgenoot* (July 1932):

³ This applies of course to any vocabulary in a language; even indigenous words can

"Niemand sal daaraan dink om te wil veg teen sulke woorde soos briek en horsweep nie."

In hindsight we know that it was not only thought of, but in the case of *briek* has even been quite successful. Such examples illustrate that puristic endeavours, so often and easily scoffed at, can and do attain some degree of success.

The many writings of the 1930's on anglicisms in Afrikaans indicate, when one compares the observations of those writers with today's reality, how much "purer" Afrikaans these days seems to be. Scholtz (1980:105), taking up this point, remarks:

"'n Menigte Engelse woorde wat in Afrikaans gekom het in die tydperk van die kwaaieste Anglisering en lank in Afrikaans in gebruik was, is later weer deur die suiwer Hollands-Afrikaanse ekwivalente vervang (soos juts deur regter, en koort deur hof) of is besig om hul houvas te verloor (soos brekfis teenoor ontbyt, briek teenoor rem, bottelstoor teenoor drankwinkel)."

Smith (1962:42, but written 1936-39) comments on the great interest in, and wealth of, publications on linguistic purity in the late 1930's. Van Rensburg (1983:136) mentions that words such as *brekfis*, *koort*, *koers* (*reisieskoers*), *juts*, *rente* (*i.p.v. huur*), *antie*, *toorts* were commonly used right into the 1940's. An anonymous subscriber to *Die Huisgenoot* (20/10/44) was also prompted to comment:

"Kyk net hoeveel Anglisismes en Engelse woorde is gedurende die afgelope tien of twintig jaar al uit die taal verwyder."⁴

The explanation for this relatively sudden apparent purity of vocabulary would seem to be the extensive *vernederlandsing* of the language (cf. Uys 1983) that took place in the all important 1930's when official recognition had been achieved, the Bible translation had finally been completed, the SABC had been created and the way was open for Afrikaans to assert itself in every aspect of South African life. A purification of the vocabulary of pass into oblivion, but this is not an aim actively pursued by language conscious members of the speech community as it is in the case of languages concerned about their survival and thus their purity.

⁴ W. Kempen, writing for *Ons Eie Boek* in 1946, was concerned about the common man's difficulty with writing pure Afrikaans. He conducted a survey whereby he took a reputable Afrikaans magazine (unnamed but was it *Die Huisgenoot*?) over the years 1920-45 and counted the number of anglicisms per 100 pages. His findings were as follows: 1920 - 95, 1925 - 35, 1930 - 29.5, 1935 - 23.5, 1945 - 22.5.

the language occurred at this time which was somewhat akin to the relexification that pidgin languages undergo when they are elevated by circumstances to creoles. (cf. Todd 1974:50) It was also a time in South Africa's history when many Afrikaans scholars and future politicians were returning from their studies in Holland and were thus in a good position to lend support to the patriotic feeling prevalent at the time. Odendal (1978: 72), one of South Africa's best known lexicographers, sees the success in ousting the above loanwords from a somewhat different, although not necessarily unrelated, point of view:

"So ly dit m.i. geen twyfel dat woorde soos juts, koort, slipper, tikkiet, lift, flat, sandwich, wat nog in die jare dertig deur bekende taalkundiges as ingeburger beskou is, uit die taal van baie verdwyn het mede onder invloed van woordeboeke e.d. nie."

The success that has been achieved by puristic endeavours so far remains chiefly limited to the realm of vocabulary. De Vooys (1925:3) made a remark about purism drives in general which is valid for the Afrikaans situation in particular:

"Voor het streven naar taalzuivering is een groot deel van het publiek gemakkelijk te winnen."

Even with general public support, however, the common man is usually incapable of recognising any purity other than lexical, and even there he is likely, as a result of ignorance, to go too far and start avoiding either truly indigenous structures that coincidentally resemble English (although they may be cognate) or turn against the international component in the vocabulary of Afrikaans because of its resemblance to English. Many Afrikaners thus support the concern for the purity of their language, but are incapable in practice of contributing anything beyond the lexical, committing excesses even there.

The purity of vocabulary, in as far as it has not been achieved by (re)introducing Dutch terminology, has been aided by loan translation (cf. p.73) and the coining of neologisms. Scholtz (1980:105) says of the latter:

"Die strewe is om vir sake waarmee die Afrikaanssprekende die eerste deur medium van Engels kennis maak, 'n geskikte Afrikaanse woord te vind of te maak as daar geen bruikbare Nederlandse woord bestaan nie. So het die volgende woorde,

naas baie ander, in Afrikaans in algemene gebruik gekom: duikweg (vir subway), naweek (vir weekend) en toebroodjie (vir sandwich)."

De Vooy, talking of the Dutch experience with attempts to purify the language, says:

"De geschiedenis leert dat purismen, door toonaangevende geleerden of dichters ingevoerd, tot op onze tijd in gebruik bleven."

A case in point in South Africa are the two words *komper* and *rekenaar* (also now less frequently *rekenoutomaat*), which competitive press organisations supported to keep the international term "computer" at bay. This has been so successful that both words (even all three) have survived and "computer" did not get a foot in the door.⁵ *Televisie* versus *beeldradio*, on the other hand, is a case where the purism has definitely lost the race; *beeldradio* was quite common in the days prior to television and for some time after its introduction, but is now seldom if ever used.

The plethora of *vaktaalwoordeboeke* in Afrikaans, most of which have been compiled by the *vaktaalburos*, are currently the most blatant means of counteracting English influence on the lexis of Afrikaans. To my knowledge no systematic investigation has yet been conducted into how far the theory and the practice of terminological dictionaries diverge from one another. Coetzee (1939:22-23) does, however, give a substantial list of English loanwords to do with mining, for example, and adds:

"Sedertdien het 'n nuwe geslag Afrikaanse mynwerkers Afrikaanse name gevind vir hierdie begrippe wat aanvanklik so vreemd was vir hulle voorsate dat hulle taalvermoë daardeur verstom geraak het."

Nevertheless, whatever the contributions of bodies such as newspapers, authors, *vaktaalburos* and the *Akademie* to the purity of Afrikaans may be, "Sonder die medewerking van die algemene publiek, ook die oninigelige deel daarvan, kan geen taalstryd gewen word nie." (Hiemstra 1963:7)

⁵ The fact that universities now have departments of *rekenaarwetenskap* and libraries etc. are *gerekenariseer* may well mean that *komper's* days are numbered. *HAT* does not recognise *komper* but does, curiously enough, include the lemma *rekenoutomaat* in addition to *rekenaar*; the latest volume of *WAT* does, on the other hand, include *komper*. (cf. Eksteen 1978:111 for a discussion of this word)

5.3 The disadvantages of purism

Many Afrikaans scholars, while usually supporting puristic efforts being applied to Afrikaans, have nevertheless been quick to realise that often more harm can be done than good. The disadvantages can be legion and one could well ask oneself whether they are outweighed by the advantages. Kempen (*Ons Eie Boek*, Dec. 1946) summed up part of the problem as follows:

"... die taal kan alleen op gevaar van onnatuurlikheid af heeltemal suiwer wees."

M. de Villiers makes a similar statement, but gives more detail of the sort of unnatural language caused by the urge to use "pure" language:

"... die puris... veroorsaak heel dikwels dat die kind met die badwater uitgegooi word. Hy dryf sy mede-Afrikaners weg van spontane gesproke taal tot allerlei gramadoelas: tot boekagtigheid, tot omslagtige korrektheid, of ook wel tot oordrewe idiomatiese beeldspraak, selfs platheid."

In another article De Villiers (*Die Huisgenoot*, 18/11/49) makes the interesting observation that sometimes in the effort to avoid a (suspected) anglicism, another one is misguidedly employed:

"Die sin of sinsnede wat die Anglisisme vervang, is soms 'n ander Anglisisme, of 'n lomp wending of enkele male verskillend van betekenis (opvallend is die neiging tot boekagtige uitdrukkings) e.g. kortliks vir in kort i.p.v. kortom, is hy telefonies verbind vir is hy op die telefoon i.p.v. het hy 'n telefoon, na alles vir agter alles i.p.v. per slot van sake."

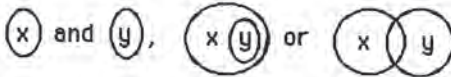
De Villiers' image of throwing the baby out with the bathwater is most appropriate in this context in several respects. The prejudice against international vocabulary which is so prevalent among Afrikaners because of the mistaken belief that such loanwords constitute superfluous anglicisms, leads not only to a reduction in the number of synonyms at one's disposal for stylistic variation, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to an avoidance of items of vocabulary which are not at all replaceable by indigenous structures:

"Selfs wanneer die sg. vreemde woorde nie afgekeur word nie, word gesuggereer dat hulle oortollige sinonieme is. Die feit is egter dat sinonieme byna altyd ten dele ooreenstem en ten dele verskil." (De Villiers 1970:244)

Schutte (1977) shows conclusively that more often than not simply a *skynkongruensie* exists between the international structure and the item which the purist may feel inclined to replace it by:

"In sommige gevalle veroorsaak die Romaanse en Germaanse items in die een konteks 'n tautologie, maar nie in die ander konteks nie. Dit is 'n aanduiding dat daar nie volkome ooreenstemming is nie, maar dat die items in 'n bepaalde betrekking van insluiting of uitsluiting tot mekaar staan." (Schutte 1977:13)⁶

In her work Schutte contrasts sets of cognate forms such as *admireer*, *admirasie*, *admirerend*, *admirabel* and *bewonder*, *bewondering*, *bewonderend*, *bewonderenswaardig*. (p.14) She labels the Romance group x and the Germanic group y and illustrates the semantic field of each and their overlapping as follows:



"'n Betekenis van x is y: in die meeste gevalle kan x deur y vervang word, maar nie noodwendig andersom nie." (p.12)

Schutte also takes up the point of purism often giving rise to unnatural sounding language:

"Nog 'n beswaar teen die Romaanse vorme is dat dit onnodige 'geleerdheidsvertoon' is en dat die Germaanse woord in die proses verdring word. Dit lei dan tot doelbewuste bestending van 'n Germaanse teenhanger, ook in gevalle waar daar geen werklike sinoniem bestaan nie, byvoorbeeld 'knap' of 'hedendaags' in plaas van gesofistikeerd." (p.5)

There are instances in Afrikaans where the puristic counterpart of an international word has established itself to the (virtual) exclusion of the latter and where, compared with Dutch where the two continue to coexist, a useful distinction in meaning has been lost, e.g. *ernstig/serieus* where the two are seldom interchangeable in Dutch but the former is used in Afrikaans to cover the semantic field of both. The same applies to *koek/cake* in Dutch where the loanword is simply not tolerated in South Africa. (cf. 7.5)

De Vooy (1925:23), once again talking from the secure position of a Dutchman whose language is under no real threat whatever its susceptib-

⁶ Schutte also contributed an article to *Klasgids* (November 1976:58-61) in which the essence of her M.A. thesis is summarised.

ility to borrowing from its neighbours is, defends the retention of foreign words – and thus international vocabulary too – even when they are completely synonymous with indigenous structures:

"Ook als de begripsinhoud van een vreemd woord geheel overeenkomt met die van een bestaand Nederlands woord, kan het eerste als onmisbaar gevoeld worden."

He quotes A. Noreen to defend his attitude:

"De Zweed Noreen die als ideaal van taaljuistheid de doeltreffendheid vooropstelt beweert zelfs: we hebben eer te weinig dan te veel vreemde woorden: voor verschillend doel en ten bate van onderscheiden stijl ontlene men gerust woorden van alle kanten!"

De Vooy's also refers to O. Jespersen as another anti-purist of renown. De Vooy's attacks the purists, claiming "Van onderscheid in gevoelswaarde tonen deze taalverarmers geen begrip." (p.27) He offers some advice which could be heeded more in future by those in South Africa who are concerned about the purity of Afrikaans:

"Wie voor taalzuiverheid waken wil, zorg er voor, de kloof tussen spreken en schrijven niet nodeloos te verbreden." (p.29)

This is somehow reminiscent of the catch-cry of the GRA, *Ons skryf soos ons praat*, a former aim in the days when Dutch was the adversary that had to be contended with but one which is no longer pursued now that English is in that position. In defending the retention of synonymous loanwords to resort to for stylistic variation or greater precision, one should nevertheless heed the following warning by De Villiers (*Die Huisgenoot*, 2/12/49):

"Natuurlik moet ons oppas dat ons nie kunsmatige logiese onderskeidinge skep nie, 'n flater wat al baie taalboekies begaan het...",

although he is not referring specifically to loanwords here.

The image of the baby being discarded with the bathwater also applies to another facet of purism, hypercorrection. There are many words and expressions in Afrikaans which correspond with English because of the close affinity of the two languages:

"Gewone Afrikaanse uitdrukings is verdag bloot omdat hulle woordeliks ooreenkom met die Engelse idioom: ...in trane uitbars, ...hy pak die koei by die horings, ...hy het hier opgegroeï." (De Villiers, *Die Huisgenoot*, 18/11/49)

On occasions, although it is impossible to generalise about exactly when this occurs, Afrikaners avoid a legitimate indigenous structure because their awareness of a similar or identical structure in English leads them to believe that the former is not correct Afrikaans. There are many well-known examples of this: *die bus verpas* (instead of *mis*), *met vakansie* (instead of *op*), *betyds* (instead of *op tyd*) *ek kan hom nie verdra nie* (instead of *uitstaan*). Smith (*Die Naweek*, 28/10/48) even goes so far as to maintain that *op my linkerhand* is said instead of *aan* because of the phonetic similarity between "on" and *aan*. Is this also the motivation behind *op die telefoon* (Dt. *aan*), or is this an example of a synonymuos couplet? (cf. 7.15) The former examples are commonly referred to in the literature on the topic as *vermeende* or *skyn-Anglismes*. (cf. 6.00)

The degree of terminological precision that can be lost by too great an insistence on puristic avoidance of foreign, or seemingly foreign, vocabulary can constitute a considerable problem. As De Vooys (1925:22) says, "Onder technici vinden de puristen dan ook niet veel aanhang." Cluver (1982:76), writing in *Die Taalpraktisyn on vakaalwoordeboeke*, complains:

"Die oorvleueling is irriterend genoeg, maar die feit dat daar ook heelwat gevalle voorkom waar dieselfde begrip anders benoem word, is verwarrend en teenproduktief."

There are many cases in point in Afrikaans, even outside the realm of *vakterminologie*, where the desire to use indigenous structures leads to competitive forms that can cause some confusion until such time as one is overwhelmingly accepted as the word by the speech community. Until such a time is reached, terms can coexist in free variation – such as *komper* and *rekenaar* – which does no harm as long as everyone recognises both words as exact synonyms. A glance at the deodorants in a South African supermarket in April 1985 revealed that of those brands that used bilingual labels and avoided the loanwords *deodorant* and *antiperspirant*, only one used *sweetweerder* (Shield), while all others used the word *reukweerder*. In practice the latter seems to be more common and is recognised by *HAT*. The entry in *HAT*, however, reads as follows: *reukweerder*, *reukweermiddel*: *Reukverdrywer*. But examination of the labels on air-fresheners cum toilet sprays in a supermarket revealed that the vast majority used the term *lugverfrisser* whereas one brand (Bayfresh) used *reukverdrywer*. The potential for confusion is illustrated by this example

whereas retention of *deodorant*, as in Dutch, avoids such problems. Another potentially confusing situation has been created by the substitution of the word *taxi* with the purism *huurmotor*, which can also mean a rented car, as it does in Dutch (*huurauto*). Both definitions are given by *HAT*.

Creation of puristic terms to avoid loanwords can lead to new terms coexisting without semantic distinction, as illustrated above. Equally, there is always the chance, given the existence of two words, that a semantic distinction between the two can emerge in the mind of some speakers, for example: there seems to be a variety of opinion about what a calculator is in Afrikaans: *optelmasjien?* – but an adding machine is not necessarily a calculator; *sakrekenaar?* – but not all calculators are pocket size and without the prefix, one is left with a computer. The meaning of any puristic avoidance of the word calculator can only be clear from the context. Although Smith (1962:64, but written 1936-39) apparently did not feel in the late 1930's that *hyser*, *hysbak*, *hysbus*, *hystoestel* or *ligter* had much chance of competing against *lift*, time has proven him wrong. *Hysbak* and *hyser*, despite the multiple meanings of the latter, coexist in free variation in Afrikaans today. Interestingly enough, however, *HAT* makes a subtle distinction between the two which I doubt has any foundation in reality.⁷ A variety of terms is likely to ultimately aid the retention of the loanword because only then can ambiguity definitely be avoided:

"Hoe meer 'n taaleenheid se krag daarenteen verdeeld is deur eie-talige sinonieme of sterk ander-talige eenhede wat op hom lyk, hoe meer is hy vir vreemde invloede vatbaar." (Rousseau 1937:V)

Van den Toorn (1977:79) sees yet another danger in purism:

"Bovendien heeft het consequente streven naar taalzuivering het nadeel dat men zijn taal geheel en al buiten internationale stromingen houdt en daardoor de toegang tot z'n eigen landstaal bemoeilijkt."

As long as the purists, who have achieved a surprising degree of success in Afrikaans, are satisfied with only partial success and leave it to the speech community to accept or reject their creations, no harm can be done. Such exaggerated attempts to purify the language as Van den Toorn's example from Icelandic *jafnaðarmaður* (socialist, lit. fair or impartial man), are rare in Afrikaans.

⁷ *HAT* sees a *hysbak* as constituting part of a *hyser*.

Reference has been made earlier in this book to the preference of some purists for Dutch structures to replace English inspired structures in Afrikaans with which the average Afrikaner, certainly these days, is much better acquainted. The wisdom of such purists' wishes is all the more questionable when the construction they aim to retain is a gallicism in Dutch. De Bruto (1970: 41), where he discusses the new meanings in Afrikaans of words such as *partikulier*, *eventueel* and *definitief* as a result of the "klankooreenkoms" with cognate forms in English, asks "opnuut ontstaan die vraag waarom die taalpolitikus die Franse 'leenwoord' bo die Engelse een verkies?" In the same article he also goes on to defend the new stress pattern in *minister*, *telegram* etc. (cf. p.51) De Bruto's tolerance towards certain English structures in Afrikaans was supported earlier by Langenhoven (1935:103) even in 1935 when the purists were at their most active.

Appeals such as Le Roux (1968, but written in 1947) makes for the replacement of constructions like *wat van* (p.167) and *bly* (p.171) by Dutch equivalents are not only all the more doomed to failure now than in 1947 because of the minimal acquaintance with Dutch, but such expressions are simply not recognisable as anglicisms without a knowledge of Dutch. If a given structure is no longer felt to be an anglicism and occurs frequently in speech, and sometimes now even in writing, nothing positive will be gained by attempting to instil in people's minds a realisation that it is English in origin and should thus be avoided. The new reality must be accepted and recognised for what it is – linguistic change. A new evaluation of such phenomena is hinted at by Combrink (1983)⁸ where he refers to *as sodanig* as a "puristiese vervanging" of *as sulks*. The following astute observation is made by Suffeleers (1979:206) who is critical of purists and who, unlike De Vooy, is a Fleming and thus talks from that relatively insecure position that has several similarities with South Africa:

"Het is een paradox in de geschiedenis van de taalverzorging dat het oude puristische streven om het taalgebruik door vertaling van (vooral Franse) leenwoorden 'Nederlandser' te maken, precies een factor is van verwijdering van de standaardtaal, aangezien de voorgestelde 'oplossingen' – meestal vruchteloos – functionerende aliënismen proberen te verdringen. De radicale purist schiet op die manier zijn doel voorbij: hij isoleert zich voor een deel van de taalgemeenschap."

⁸ Combrink's (1984) article was originally written as a confidential report for the *Taalkommissie* in 1983. When it eventually appeared in 1984, the list of anglicisms that accompanied the original report was not included. This example is taken from that appendix.

Louw (1959:22), an avid supporter of purism, maintains:

"... persoonlik glo ek dat Afrikaans vandag oor die algemeen suiwerder, d.w.s. korrekter en beter gebruik word as ooit vantevore in ons geskiedenis!"

De Villiers' (1970:245) reservations in this regard are totally warranted, however:

"Maar ons mag nie te trots wees op die vordering nie, want in die plek van talle [leenwoorde] wat verdring is, het honderde nuwes gekom."

If this is the case for vocabulary, it is all the more so when it comes to borrowed idioms and loan translations. Suffeleers mentions that the same phenomenon occurs in Belgium:

"J. Obrie wijst op de blinde vlek in het gezichtsveld van de meeste Vlamingen: zij menen dat taalzuiverheid erin bestaat de vreemde woorden te vermijden." (p.189)

There would seem to be little doubt that puristic endeavours in South Africa have been much more successful in replacing English loanwords with neologisms and loan translations than they have been in reintroducing indigenous (Dutch?) expressions to replace the many English idioms – the speech community has translated them for itself and it unlikely to abandon them, for example: *jou eie beuel blaas, iemand se been trek, iemand oor die kole haal*. Valkhoff (1972:28), who was notoriously wrong in so many of the conclusions he came to with regard to "impurities" in Afrikaans, was not far from the mark, however, when he stated:

"Generally speaking where Dutch and Flemings borrowed their culture and their terminology from the French, the Afrikaners have done so from English. Nevertheless, on account of the synchronic purism, which is prevalent in South Africa all words and idioms that had an English aspect have been eliminated by the various bureaux of terminology. In this way Afrikaans has come to look much purer than standard Dutch, which does not suffer from purists and accepts foreign loanwords very easily. Yet this 'Dutch' appearance of literary Afrikaans is deceptive, for the English influence goes much deeper than meets the eye."

5.4 Forms of purism

In all language communities where purism plays a role, excesses are likely to be committed which then bring the whole movement into disrepute. Somehow a middle road has to be found between the desire to maintain a certain purity (often a purity which wasn't even there in Dutch to begin with) and the need to be non-isolationist, practical and take common usage into account. A language is after all merely a code which can only function efficiently if all its speakers are in general agreement as to which verbal symbols are used and what they signify.

A joke is told in South Africa which goes as follows:

"Hoekom roer die Brit sy tee links om en die Boer syne regs om? – Om dit soet te kry."

At times one can't help feeling that certain puristic trends have no more point than this joke, i.e. that they are based on a belief that to preserve one's identity one must not only retain the traditional differences, but even create new ones. Attitudes to spelling are an example of this. Renkema (1984:114) relates the following anecdote with regard to Dutch spelling in Holland and Belgium:

"Toen de commissie van Belgische en Nederlandse deskundigen in de jaren na de oorlog aan het werk ging, bleek al spoedig dat de discussie over c of k sterk emotioneel gekleurd was. Vele Nederlanders hadden in de jaren '40-'45 een hekel gekregen aan de k van de Deutsche Kulturkamer. Geef ons maar de c, zei men in het Noorden. Nee, volstrekt niet, zeiden de Vlamingen, die c is ons veel te Frans. Juist door de taal moeten wij laten zien hoe ver we van de Walen af staan."

The decision in the late nineteenth century to adopt the Kolloewijn spelling of Dutch in South Africa – actually an attempt at the time to save Dutch from displacement by Afrikaans – has permitted Afrikaans to assimilate foreign words better than Dutch. Malherbe (*Die Huisgenoot*, 28/9/28) appropriately refers to this practice as *sjouwinistiese spelling*. In some respects the Dutch and Flemings are still paying the price for not having adopted Kolloewijn's recommendations in the 1890's; on the other hand, the puristic advantages of that spelling are of lesser importance to the Dutch. Suffeleers (1979: 180) sees a connection between the sensitivity with regard to the borrowing of foreign words and the subsequent desire to apply an indigenous spelling to those that can't be dispensed with:

"Dezelfde gevoeligheid zou voor een deel het 'spelling-purisme' kunnen verklaren, dat vreemde woorden door een zo 'Nederlands' mogelijk schriftbeeld in het eigen cultuurbezit wil verankeren..."

The above examples illustrate how much paralinguistic factors play a role in puristic tendencies.

Mention has been made before of the distinction so commonly made by Afrikaans linguists between *Bedürfnis-* and *Luxuslehnwörter*. (cf. p.48) Ostin's (1972:53) observation was that "For the average immigrant in general and the Fleming in particular, there are not two categories of English words, i.e. the necessary ones and the superfluous ones. The distinctions are made by zealous purists." It cannot be denied that the same applies to Afrikaans to a degree.

Hypercorrection is also common to all linguistic environments where social pressure exists to be puristic. The close affinity of English and Afrikaans simply means that in this particular bilingual situation, the causes of hypercorrection are exceedingly common. Although hypercorrection was discussed under the disadvantages of purism (cf. 5.3), it can equally be seen as a form of purism; Suffeleers (1979:182) even goes so far as to maintain that "overdreven purisme [is] ...een vorm van hypercorrectie."

From a diachronic point of view the most important single factor in retaining, or perhaps even in restoring, the purity of Afrikaans has been standard Dutch. Uys (1983:166-7) describes what occurred in Afrikaans earlier this century when the recognition of Afrikaans brought with it an increased demand for purism:

"Na die amptelike erkenning van Afrikaans as offisiële landstaal het die Engelse aanslag teen hierdie 'jong' taaltjie in al sy felheid losgebars en weer eens sou 'n teruggryp na Nederlands noodsaaklik wees vir oorlewing... Die taalmanne van 1925 het dus nou begryp dat hulle om praktiese redes nie al te ver van Nederlands moes afwyk nie. Hulle het dus van die standpunt uitgegaan om voorkeur aan die eie Afrikaanse woord of uitdrukking te gee. Besit ons self niks geskiks nie, of kan ons met niks bruikbaar vorendag kom nie, moet aan Nederlands ontleen word."

The tendency to coin neologisms does not seem to have been as common at that time in the history of Afrikaans. It seems that would develop once the language had asserted itself and as the gap between Dutch and Afrikaans

grew wider and also possibly as it was realised that Dutch often could not provide the goods. Du Toit (1965:134) is but one of several scholars to remark that many anglicisms occur in Afrikaans where Dutch too either uses an English word or has borrowed from another language (cf. also Smith 1962:64) But equally, in such instances in Afrikaans these days one is more likely to find a neologism or a loan translation, occasionally with the loss of a semantic distinction that exists in Dutch, for example: Dutch *cake/koek* = Afr. *koek*, Dutch *fifty-fifty* = Afr. *vyftig-vyftig*, Dutch *liften* = Afr. *ryloop*, Dutch *nasynchroniseren* (< French) = Afr. *oorklank*, Dutch *airconditioning* = Afr. *lugreëling*, *-versorging*, Dutch *gehandicapte* = Afr. *gestremde*, Dutch *weekend/weekeinde* = Afr. *naweek*. It is worth noting at this point that if an English word is borrowed into Afrikaans, because of the Afrikaner's intimate acquaintance with English, the word will always be used with exactly the same meaning as in English; the Dutch on the other hand have borrowed numerous English words that have undergone a shift in meaning, for example: *cake* (a particular sort), *ponie* (= fringe i.e. hairstyle; pronounced with a short o), *pick-up* (= record-player with a non-English stress on the second syllable), *all-in-verzekeringspolis* (= comprehensive insurance policy), *catering* (= home catering), *marketing* (= market research), *planning* (= time schedule). Not only does this not occur in South Africa, but puristic evasions of such words – a more common occurrence in Afrikaans in such cases – always correspond exactly in meaning with the English words they replace, for example: *koek*, *spysenering*, *bemarking* and *beplanning* all cover the same semantic field as the corresponding English words above and a *ponie* in Afrikaans is exactly that, a small horse (pronounced with a long o).

Even if Afrikaans has chosen in many instances to take a different path from Dutch with respect to tolerating loanwords, in more cases than one can probably now appreciate, Dutch must have baled Afrikaans out of difficulty in the past. Coetzee (1948:13) remarked:

"Ook in hierdie nuwe tydperk staan Nederlands beskermend teenoor die eertydse veldkind. Want dit moet ons duidelik besef: sonder die Nederlandse kultuur- en taalbronne om rykelyk uit te put, kon die huidige stand van Afrikaans as ampstaal en as kultuurtaal slegs met die uiterste kraginspanning bereik word, indien wel."

The fact that even today the *Akademie* does not completely ignore Dutch practice when making decisions on Afrikaans linguistic issues indicates that at least as far as attempts to keep the vocabulary of the language pure are concerned, Dutch can still function as a norm, even if only in a consultative

capacity. In 1921 Boshoff (1921:276) saw Dutch as the only solution to the shortcomings in Afrikaans vocabulary:

"Die tyd is nou eers pas aangebreek, dat Afrikaans sy regmatige eise sal laat geld as wettige erfgenaam en loot van die Dietse stam. Waar die inherente vormkragte van Afrikaans self tekortsiet, sal Afrikaners hulle in die eerste plek moet behelp uit die oeroue woordvoorraad."

Combrink (1968:8), writing many years after Boshoff, has quite a different attitude:

"Afrikaans het...hoegenaamd geen standhoudende voedingsbron behalwe die skeppingskrag en die trotse gees van sommige van sy sprekers nie."

The synchronic approach to purism is indeed predominantly that expounded by Combrink here, as well as in his most recent publication on anglicisms (1984:105) and by De Villiers' (1970:245) previously mentioned attitude of "oorneem EN vertaal" (cf. p.73).

Coining new words is not easy and achieving general acceptance of such words can be even harder. As was mentioned on p.149, *komper* acquired a certain frequency thanks to the support of the Cape newspaper group, *Nasionale Pers*; Pienaar (1931:168) attributes the adoption of *rolprent* and *tikskrif* (*tikmasjien*, *tikster* etc.) to the support of *Die Volkstem*. Decisions of the *Akademie* (i.e. re the AWS) or *vaktaalburos* need such backing if they are to be generally accepted. Sometimes neither a neologism nor a loan translation has provided the solution, but a *Lehnübertragung* (cf. 7.2), i.e. a word which is close in literal meaning to the English term it seeks to avoid but one which is nevertheless not a literal translation, for example: *blitsverkoper* (best seller), *duinebesie* (beach buggy) *bobbejaansleutel* (monkey wrench) *sypaadjie* (sidewalk). It could be argued that such words are neologisms (cf. 7.3), which they are in a broader sense of the word, but there is a difference between them and other neologisms which bear no relation to English at all, for example: *huurmotor* (taxi) *moltrein* (underground) *oorklank* (to dub).

Finally, another very common form of purism in Afrikaans is the substitution of international vocabulary with indigenous synonyms, where such exist, which can lead to the problems of *skynkongruensie* discussed by Schutte. (cf. p.151) Although Afrikaans has the words *edisie*, *psigologies* and *unaniem*, for example, and some (educated) people may not hesitate to use them, *uitgawe*, *sielkundig* and *eenparig* occur much more frequently.