

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 Pseudo-anglicisms (*skyn-Anglisismes*)

In the literature on anglicisms in Afrikaans continual reference is made to what some writers call *skyn-Anglisismes* and others call *vermeende Anglisismes*. These terms are synonymous and I have chosen to translate them with pseudo-anglicisms.

6.1 Misconceptions and witch hunts (*wanopvattinge en Anglisismejag*)

On reading what has been written about anglicisms in Afrikaans, one is immediately struck by the degree to which scholars have contradicted each other in the past as to which structures are or are not anglicisms and which are or are not "acceptable". Too often the emphasis has been on the origin of a given phenomenon and on whether it displaces an indigenous one rather than on usage and how the speech community perceives it, regardless of its origin. That attitude, quite apart from the impossibility of scholars ever agreeing on the origin of certain structures, has contributed to the linguistic insecurity of many Afrikaners in that what their ear tells them is correct, prescriptive bodies such as grammars, dictionaries and teachers claim is incorrect. This overdeveloped sensitivity towards English inspired constructions has unfortunately commonly led to legitimate indigenous structures being avoided which, for a variety of reasons (cf. 6.2), can resemble English structures.¹ This is the most lamentable aspect of the *Anglisismevrees* that is so common in South Africa and which is aided by the grammars and dictionaries currently in use in educational establishments. The only way to minimise contradiction and the doubts it gives rise to in the minds of speakers of Afrikaans, is to abandon etymology as a valid criterion for accepting or rejecting a given structure: frequency can be the only valid criterion for assessing acceptability. The wisdom of such an approach is borne out all the more by the fact that so many scholars who have written on anglicisms have not regarded English origin alone as grounds for rejecting a particular phenomenon, but whether an English inspired construction displaces an indigenous one. (cf. 4.3) Thus one is

¹ De Villiers (*Die Huisgenoot*, 18/11/49) conducted a brief survey among circa 30 educated Afrikaners to see if they would recognise English influence: "...van die 137 sinne en sinsnedes waarvan die ondervraagdes moes sê of dit Anglisismes is of goeie Afrikaans, was 63 werklik Anglisismes en 74 goeie Afrikaans. Maar meer as die helfte van die proefpersone het geantwoord dat daar 82 Anglisismes was en 43 korrekte verbindings (12 uitdrukkinge onseker)."

faced with a double subjectivity: 1) what is of English origin?, 2) does it displace an indigenous structure?

The traditional attitude has been that if it is English and does not displace, a structure is acceptable and therefore does not constitute an anglicism, this label usually being reserved for English structures that one wishes to oppose, rather than being used as a general term for any English inspired phenomenon in Afrikaans. But if one accepts that Dutch is an acceptable *voedingsbron* for Afrikaans and preferable to English, which seems to have been the attitude of many who have written on anglicisms, then one can assume that **any** English structure used in Afrikaans could well be replaced by whatever the Dutch say in that instance – except in the very few cases where the Dutch also resort to English vocabulary – and consequently that all anglicisms in Afrikaans displace one or other Diets structure. Therefore, from that point of view, no anglicism is necessary and thus acceptable: the Dutch cope without them, so why not the Afrikaners? Clearly such an approach, which condemns all English structures, would be as impractical as the current one seems to be where prescriptive bodies all decide subjectively and unilaterally what **they** consider acceptable – often with an (unconscious?) bias towards Dutch. (cf. Steyn, p.78) Usage is the only valid determinator of acceptability and as usage changes with time, so will acceptability. Authoritative prescriptive works such as *HAT* and *WAT* require total revision with this in mind. Their compilers have lost touch with reality in many instances: if they consider a Dutch structure preferable in one instance, even if it is at odds with general practice, why not in all cases?

Because of his lack of linguistic training, the average speaker of Afrikaans falls victim to two misconceptions: 1) he does not recognise many structures as English which are, and 2) he perceives many which are not English as being so. De Villiers (1976:32), referring in this instance to international vocabulary in Afrikaans, maintains correctly:

"Vir die leek moet dit soms lyk asof sommige woorde met hierdie uitgange [i.e. -eer etc.] bloot vermomde Engels is. Dit is dan net die taalkundige wat – gewoonlik – weet of die betrokke woord 'n onlangse en regstreekse oorname uit Engels is, en of dit al 'n langer tyd as leenwoord gevestig is. Maar hierdie 'taalkundige' kennis weerspieël natuurlik nie noodwendig die gewone gebruiker se oordeel nie."

This statement can be applied to other *vermeende Anglicismes* too, although international vocabulary is certainly the prime example of this misconception in the speech community at large.

The literature abounds with statements and counterstatements on the origin, and thus usually the acceptability, of expressions such as *aangaan*, *'n mooi éen*, *storie*, *welaf*, *wonder*, *voel*, *op/met vakansie*, etc. The final example even prompted Smith (1962:54) to draw a semantic distinction between the two, a distinction which I for one do not understand; in Holland on the other hand, the former is supposedly typically Catholic and the latter Protestant, or typical of southern and northern usage respectively, if you will. Another strange extreme the phobia of anglicisms has led to is the common occurrence of *verpas*, a germanism, to avoid the legitimately Diets expression *mis*, which happens to resemble English:

"Dis merkwaardig hoe mense 'n taalgebruik kan verwerp waarteen eintlik niks in te bring is nie, maar glad nie gehinder word nie deur 'n ander wat heeltemal foutief is en sterk af te keur." (Le Roux 1968:169)

Smith (1962:72) says of H.J. Rousseau's work:

"In sy ywer om alle 'Engelshede' op onverbiddelike wyse bloot te lê, gaan die skrywer egter soms te ver."

Unfortunately the finger that Smith points at Rousseau here can be pointed at almost everybody that has written on the topic; alternatively, scholars have gone overboard at times in trying to prove that phenomena which resemble English and don't exist in standard Dutch have their origins in archaic or dialectal Dutch. Without a more complete knowledge of the *volkstaal* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many such claims cannot be made with certainty – but nor can the reverse. It is a legitimate academic pursuit to theorise on such issues and substantiate one's claims with documentary evidence if it can be found, but one must not for one moment be deluded into thinking that such findings bear any relevance to the language as perceived and used by the speech community. Many academics in the past have apparently considered their findings and opinions on the origins of structures in Afrikaans as bearing some relevance to the acceptability of those structures. More often than not they have done the Afrikaans speech community a disservice by each pursuing his own line of argument, however at odds it might have been with common practice, and thus sowing the seeds of linguistic insecurity so prevalent among Afrikaners today.

6.2 The difficulties of distinguishing real from pseudo-anglicisms

The inherent affinity of English and Afrikaans was discussed under 2.1.4.

The affinity factors deserve repetition here as they are usually at the root of the confusion about whether a given structure in Afrikaans has arisen under the influence of English or not.

First and foremost there is the vast wealth of cognate structures which the two languages still share from their common ancestry:

"Dieselfde uitdrukking kan in verwante tale voorkom sonder dat die een aan die ander ontleen het. 'n Uitdrukking kan sowel goeie Nederlands – en, alle dinge gelyk synde, daarom ook goeie Afrikaans – as goeie Engels wees sonder dat die een taal deur die ander beïnvloed is." (Le Roux 1968:169)

In this category belong also phenomena which resemble English and which may have previously occurred in standard Dutch, or in the dialects that contributed to the formation of Afrikaans, but which are no longer encountered in Holland, cf. Francken's (1912:279-80) arguments on *enig*, 'n *mooi een* and *braaf*. Francken sums up his discussion of such points with the following remark, however:

"Deze vormen behoeven dus nog geen Anglicismen te zijn. Daarmede is niet gezegd, dat ze het niet kunnen zijn."

Smith (1962:67) mentions the same reservation.

Secondly, both English and Dutch/Afrikaans have often borrowed structures from a third source. The so-called international vocabulary is the best but not the only example of this. But even a word such as *trein*, for example, which entered both English and Dutch in the nineteenth century from French, could have made its way into Afrikaans via Dutch or English. (cf. Le Roux 1952:12)

Thirdly, there is the parallel analytical development which both English and Afrikaans have independently undergone. Only Du 'foit (1897:iv) in the nineteenth century (and later Valkhoff 1972:29) was inclined to see this as English influence on Afrikaans, but a contemporary of his, Viljoen (1896:25) was already aware this was not the case. Interestingly enough, Suffeleers (1979:211) mentions that a similar misunderstanding of the trend towards analysis in Holland exists in Flanders today:

"Ook wordt in Vlaanderen het Duitse vormenstel als model van taalrykdom aanbevolen, terwyl de deflexie 'verengelsing' van het Nederlands wordt genoemd."

Fourthly, there are those few phenomena which are unknown in both British English and Dutch and yet they occur in South African English and Afrikaans. Determining the source of these can pose problems.

Finally, one should mention a small category not discussed under 2.7.4 which only Schonken (1914:191) identifies:

"Hetzelfde [i.e. that contact with English in South Africa is not the source in Afrikaans] mag men beweren van een reeks woorden, die in het Kaapsch-Hollandsch reeds vóór den Engelschen tijd werden opgenomen, zoals het feit, dat wij ze ook in het Kreoolsche Neger-Hollandsch terugvinden, bewijst. Hier en ginds stammen zij vermoedelijk uit de achttiende-eeuwsche matrozentaal, die veel uit de taal der destijds opkomende Engelsche zeemacht had overgenomen."

He gives *roep(noem)*, *dagbreek*, *perdeskoen* and *dip* as examples.

There are numerous *ingeburgerde* structures in Afrikaans which have been the subject of much debate as to their origin and which are still disapproved of by some grammarians and dictionary compilers. Curiously enough there are others which resemble English and which do not occur in standard Dutch but which, to my knowledge, have never been regarded as suspect, for example: *myne*, *joune* etc. without the definite article (cf. Scholtz 1980:69). In other instances it can be almost impossible to ascertain whether English has served as the source of certain constructions or whether it has merely acted as a contributing factor (cf. 6.3), for example:

"As invloed van vreemde tale in rekening gebring word by die uitbreiding van die se-konstruksies, dan mag die moontlike invloed van Engels oor die afgelope honderd jaar en meer nie uitgesluit word nie. Die eenvormige patroon in Engels wat voorkom in *John's hat*, *Mary's shoes*, *the children's books*, *last year's fashions*, *yesterday's meeting*, *today's news* beantwoord aan die eenvormigheid in Afrikaans *Jan se hoed*, *Maria se skoene*, *die kinders se boeke*, *verlede jaar se modes*, *gister se vergadering*, *vandag se nuus*. Dat dikwels te ligtelik aan kreolismes in Afrikaans gedink is, blyk daaruit dat *nou se dae* sonder meer gelyk gestel is met Maleis-Portugees *agora sua tempu*, terwyl dit sonder twyfel 'n jong 'barbarisme' is en as 'n verafrikaansing van Engels *now-a-days* moet beskou word." (Scholtz 1980:71)

Another good example of the extent to which opinions on origin (and thus acceptability) can diverge as a result of the difficulty in assessing the source

due to the close affinity of the two languages, is provided by the use of the auxiliaries *is/was* in the passive in Afrikaans. Terblanche (1980) makes no mention at all of English having anything to do with the use of *was* for the formation of the pluperfect passive, whereas Langenhoven (1935:114-15), for example, rejects it outright as an anglicism. Those who do defend *was* in the passive regard it only as legitimate when used as a pluperfect, whereas in practice it is often heard where a perfect passive (= English imperfect passive) is required semantically. In such cases both Terblanche's and Langenhoven's points of view are correct. (cf. 7.10)

6.3 The role of contributing factors (*versterkende faktore*)

Scholars have often postulated that the origins of various suspect structures are to be found in older Dutch or dialects and yet because they also occur in English, which is presumably why they are considered suspect, such scholars have felt obliged to add a rider to their claims, for example:

"Engels kan hoogstens 'n behoudende invloed gehad het" (Le Roux 1952:35),

"...dit [English influence] natuurlik tot die behoud van die uitdrukking kon bygedra het." (Terblanche, *Die Brandwag*, 18/10/46)

Boshoff (1963:39) describes the phenomenon as follows:

"Ek meen dat Afrikaans meermale uit Nederlands of sy dialekte eienaardighede wat daar om die een of ander rede verlore gegaan het, behou het deurdat Engels verskynsels van 'n min of meer gelyke aard gehad het wat behoudend daarop ingewerk en die voortbestaan daarvan help bestendig het."

The term contributing factor refers to the role English has possibly played in such cases, i.e. that of a catalyst. One can seldom prove that this is the case, as there is usually some evidence of an alternative source, but nevertheless structures that fall into this category can be considered as another form of pseudo-anglicism. In addition, one can identify two distinct kinds of contributing factor: 1) there are those which correspond with former Dutch structures and thus have a *behoudende* effect on the same structure in Afrikaans; 2) there are those which correspond with innovative developments in Afrikaans with no connection with former Dutch structures. In such cases the contributing factor in English can be said to have had a pro-

gressive, rather than a conservative effect. Examples of this are possibly certain s-plurals in Afrikaans (cf. 7.17.6) and the following concluding remark from De Bruto's (1970:42) discussion on shifting stress in the international vocabulary of Afrikaans:

"Linguïsties sal hoogstens binne 'n groot vergelykings-raamwerk, gesê kan word dat die Afrikaanse patroon net verhaas kan gewees het deur Engelse beïnvloeding..."

Ponelis (1979) also makes continual reference to the possibility of English constituting a contributing factor, for example: "Versterkende Engelse invloed kan in die volgende gevalle vermoed word." (p.90)

The instances where contributing factors have been postulated by scholars in the literature on anglicisms are legion. It is also an issue on which there has been a great deal of disagreement, but this is to be expected owing to the impossibility of proving what role, if any, similar structures in English have played. Where coexistence in the two languages of similar phenomena has contributed to the frequency of one option over another, one must presumably imagine that the speaker's familiarity with a structure in English, which has a counterpart in Dutch/Afrikaans and which competes with another that is unknown in English, causes him to favour the former because it sounds all the more familiar to him – a product of his bilingualism. A case in point is perhaps the use and form of the reflexive pronoun in Afrikaans compared with Dutch. There are verbs, e.g. *voel*,² which Afrikaans dictionaries regard as non-reflexive, as in English. There are others which the dictionaries still regard as reflexive but which are commonly used without the reflexive pronoun,³ for example: *inmeng*, *spesialiseer* – *HAT* maintains *jou* is optional in the latter case but I believe it is now archaic. Alternatively, where the Afrikaner does retain the reflexive pronoun in cases where English has too, nowadays it is commonly the emphatic form with *-self* that is used, even when no emphasis is implied (e.g. *was* or *jouself was* in preference to *jou was*). In each of these cases there is a distinct point of contact (*raakpunt*) between English and Afrikaans which has created in the mind of the bilingual a fuzzy area, to paraphrase Aitchison (1981:52), which has enabled such shifts to occur, all the more so as the unemphatic reflexive pronoun is a relatively semantically empty particle anyway. (cf. 7.27.5)

² Schonken (1914:191) claims *voel* was also used in this way in seventeenth century Dutch.

³ To illustrate how remote dictionaries can be from reality and how Dutch oriented they still are at times, the *Tweetalige Woordeboek* of Bosman i.a. (1984) is so conservative as to give the infinitive of some reflexive verbs with *sig* (eg. *verbeel*), although the compilers have been rather inconsistent in this regard (eg. *inmeng*).

Hasselmo (1961:240) observed a similar phenomenon in his study of the language of Swedish immigrants in the USA:

"... it may at least in some cases be more accurate to say that the English model has reinforced a tendency already found in the language than that it constitutes the sole source for the usage."

Any two languages in contact can contain *raakpunte* which may give rise to interference. In the case in point, however, because the two languages are so closely related, there are all the more such points of contact which can even have a common etymology. The potential for influence is thus greatly increased and what is more, because the contact with Dutch has now become so tenuous, the way is open for linguistic **change** to occur, not merely **interference**.