

CHAPTER EIGHT

8.0 Conclusion and perspectives for further research

8.1 Conclusion

The reaction of those sceptics who do not regard the influence English has had so far on Afrikaans as now being integral to the very nature of the language and who thus presumably regard some of the tenets presented in this book as unacceptable, reminds one of the reaction of Afrikaners to Changuion's publication in 1844 where he suggested that *plat Kaapsch* was not only the mother-tongue of Hottentots and slaves. Nienaber (1950:22) describes the conflict that confronted the Afrikaner at the time as follows:

"Dan ontstaan 'n toestand van gespannenheid: aan die een kant die werklikheid, aan die ander kant die tradisie en ou ideaal."

The situation with regard to the degree of English influence in Afrikaans today resembles in some ways that example from nineteenth century Cape society.

If even scholars are unable to ascertain precisely what an anglicism is and what is indigenous in Afrikaans, what hope does the layman, the true custodian of the language, have? The answer is obviously no hope, but more importantly, does it matter? He, like the native-speaker of English in South Africa, should be made to feel linguistically secure enough to trust his own ear. His ear will be guided by usage, regardless of etymology and displacement of indigenous structures. Etymology would then be as irrelevant to acceptability in Afrikaans as it is in English. But it will be difficult to instil such confidence in Afrikaners as long as the main prescriptive works for which he reaches in time of doubt, are so totally remote from the everyday reality of the Afrikaans-English contact situation and continue to cling to Diets structures which, however desirable they may be from a puristic point of view, are not rooted in the reality of the spoken language. That reality is the only thing the average native-speaker is sure of, but at present he is impeded from relying on it.

The speech community has already unequivocally decided on many of the examples given in my corpus. It is time for prescriptive bodies and works to take note of this and accept these de facto decisions, even if they mean that standard Afrikaans will now deviate even more from Dutch and come closer to English; normalising bodies are at the moment inhibiting the

natural development of the language more than is usually the case with languages. I sincerely hope that this work will succeed in pumping new life into the ongoing polemic about anglicisms and perhaps usher in a new era in the way many of them are regarded. A change in attitude is urgent because, as I have attempted to illustrate, Afrikaans is in the process of becoming more and more a translated language and it is a tide which cannot and will not be turned. This metamorphosis, which is occurring as ever more English idiom is being dressed up in Diets vocabulary, is apparently the inevitable product of the unique bilingual situation that exists today in the Republic of South Africa.

8.2 Perspectives for further research

A more thorough study of many of the linguistic phenomena dealt with in chapter seven could and should be made. The vast wealth of material has prevented me from treating every aspect of English influence in the detail it may warrant. Several of the categories dealt with here could be the subject of individual monographs in themselves, but there was a need for a work that attempted to encompass all forms of influence.

As mentioned on p.169, I purposely refrain from assessing whether the structures I discuss are sufficiently *ingeburger* to be regarded as correct Afrikaans by all native-speakers. My reason, apart from not being in a position to make such an assessment because I am a non-native-speaker, is also due to the lack of unanimity that I am sure one would be confronted with if one were to attempt to ascertain what is generally recognised as correct. Nevertheless, it could be useful if another scholar were to take my corpus, expand it if necessary, and devise a means of soliciting the reactions of a broad spectrum of native-speakers to these phenomena, thereby providing the *Taalkommissie*, for example, with empirical data upon which to base future prescriptions.

A matter which I have only briefly dealt with but which could provoke the curiosity of some scholars, is a diachronic study of some of the linguistic constructions I have observed. Clearly there would be quite substantial practical problems in adopting a diachronic approach to anglicisms, but it was obvious from the reading I did that many of them have been in the language for a long time, while others have since passed into oblivion. Such a study would add a further valuable perspective to my work.

It is hinted at by Le Roux (1952:34,37) that there is possibly even a regional perspective to the topic; Du Plessis' (1983) study of *Johannesburgse omgangstaal* is an initial step in that direction. There is possibly

room for more such regional studies as well as for studies that look at the topic from a social and/or racial point of view.

It would also be possible to combine the historical and geographical perspectives and look, for example, at whether English had made greater inroads in the nineteenth century into the Afrikaans of the Cape Colony than into that of the Boer republics. One expects that that was quite possibly the case, but there is as yet no study that attempts to prove or disprove this tenet.

One could look too at the success or otherwise of puristic drives in certain professions. Certain *vaktaalwoordeboeke* have now been in existence for a considerable length of time, but to what extent have their recommendations been adopted by the people in those fields?

A systematic study of *HAT's* attitude to recognised anglicisms – and eventually of *WAT's* attitude too – could be beneficial to the consistency of future editions of that dictionary. Or the attitude to specific anglicisms in Bosman, Van der Merwe and Hiemstra's *Tweetalige Woordeboek* (1984), widely consulted by many Afrikaners instead of *HAT* for information on Afrikaans unconnected with its English equivalents, could be compared with that of *HAT* to highlight the ambivalence and inconsistency that exist with regard to many common anglicisms in the language. It is to be expected that the first volumes of *WAT* will be totally outdated in the course of time – if they are not already – with respect to anglicisms which were not recognised in the 1950's and 1960's but which Afrikaners have now accepted and in some cases have even lost all awareness that those structures were once considered anglicisms and thus unacceptable.

Rousseau's (1937) sub-chapter on *basterwoorde* (p.110-72) is so good and basically of such lasting validity that it deserves updating and rewriting in modern phraseology with the necessary adaptations in the light of modern knowledge and the situation as it is now. (cf. p.101)

The topic of anglicisms in Afrikaans is in fact open-ended because of the extent of the influence to date, but above all because it is an ongoing process. The subject is a controversial one but is also one of vital importance to South African society. Undoubtedly this work will not be the last word on the issue and hopefully it will provoke reactions and more importantly, further research.