

ENGLISH IN MULTILINGUAL SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is a country characterised by great linguistic diversity. Large indigenous languages, such as isiZulu and isiXhosa, are spoken by many millions of people, as well as the languages with European roots, such as Afrikaans and English, which are spoken by several millions and used by many more in daily life. This situation provides a plethora of contact scenarios, all of which have resulted in language variation and change, and which form the main focus of this insightful volume. Written by a team of leading scholars, it investigates a range of sociolinguistic factors and the challenges that South Africans face as a result of multilingualism and globalisation in both education and social interaction. The historical background to English in South Africa provides a framework within which the interfaces with other languages spoken in the country are scrutinised, whilst highlighting processes of contact, bilingualism, code-switching and language shift.

RAYMOND HICKEY is Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. His main research interests are varieties of English, language contact, variation and change. Some of his recent publications include *Listening to the Past* (2017), *The Cambridge Handbook of Areal Linguistics* (2017) and *English in the German-Speaking World* (2020), all published by Cambridge.

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The Linguistics of Contact and Change

EDITED BY
RAYMOND HICKEY
University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany



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Contributors

IAN BEKKER is an Associate Professor in the English Department of the School of Languages at the Potchefstroom Campus of North-West University, South Africa. His research foci include the synchronic and diachronic investigation of South African English. With respect to synchrony, a particular focus has been on (socio)phonetic features, with his PhD, 'The Vowels of South African English', and other publications initiating the use of acoustic methods in this field. With respect to diachrony, he has examined the early history of this variety, e.g. in South African English as a late nineteenth-century extraterritorial variety, published in *English World-Wide* (2012). He has also worked on language attitudes and is currently working on the social stratification of Afrikaans in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

HEATHER BROOKES is a co-director of Child Language Africa as well as Chief Research Officer and Associate Professor in the South African research programme on Language, Migration and Social Change headed by Professor Rajend Mesthrie at the University of Cape Town. She works on language in social life from a multimodal embodied perspective, specialising in the role of gesture in social interaction, social differentiation and language development. Some recent major publications include 'Urban youth languages in South Africa: a case study of tsotsitaal in a South African township' (*Anthropological Linguistics*) and 'Gestures and gesturing on the African continent' (*Handbook of African Linguistics*).

ALIDA CHEVALIER is currently a member of the Academic Staff at 2U Cape Town, and is affiliated with the University of Cape Town as a Research Officer in Linguistics. Her research interests include sociophonetics, sociolinguistics, language variation and change, automated vowel analysis and statistics for linguistics. In particular, her focus is on

English in a multilingual South Africa. Her recent publications include book chapters and articles, for instance in *Language Variation and Change* (2015), on vowel variation among young speakers in South Africa.

TESSA DOWLING has a PhD in African Languages from the University of Cape Town, where she is a senior lecturer in African Languages. Her more recent publications include: 'Problems in the acquisition of noun class 11 among Xhosa children' (with Derek Gowlett) in *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* (2016); "'Ndifuna imeaning yakhe': translingual morphology in English teaching in a South African township classroom' (with Lara Krause) in *International Journal of Multilingualism* (2018); and 'Working towards culturally and linguistically diverse speech assessments for South African children: a Xhosa case study' (with Emma Whitelaw) in *Language Matters* (2018).

DEON DU PLESSIS is a member of the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources who has been a pioneer in the investigation of regional variation in South African English. His work has contributed to our growing knowledge of the pan-racial middle-class variety of General South African English developing in South Africa; see du Plessis and Bekker, "'To Err is Human': The Case for Neorhoticity in White South African English', in *Language Matters* (2014).

CHARLYN DYERS is an emeritus professor in the Department of Linguistics, University of the Western Cape. Dyers specialises in the areas of multilingual pedagogies in higher education, the multilingual practices of new urban communities in Cape Town and the study of language attitudes and ideologies. She is the author of *Drama* (Oxford Resource Series, 1987), co-editor of the book *Kaaps in Fokus* (African Sunmedia, 2016) and author of *The Semiotics of New Spaces* (African Sunmedia, 2018), which looks at how people in a relatively new township in Cape Town are responding, through their semiotic practices, to the intense sociohistorical changes taking place in post-apartheid South Africa.

KATHLEEN HEUGH is Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at the University of South Australia. Her research and teaching focuses on multilingualism in education, literacy and policy. She has undertaken system-wide and multicountry evaluation and assessment research in twenty-five African countries for governments and international development agencies, including UNESCO. She has advised the ministries of education of thirty-five countries (in Africa, Europe and Asia). Together

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with Christopher Stroud and Piet van Avermaet, she is Editor of the Bloomsbury Series, *Multilingualisms and Diversities in Education*.

RAYMOND HICKEY is Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Duisburg-Essen. He has written several books on varieties of English, including *Dublin English: Evolution and Change* (John Benjamins, 2005), *Irish English: History and Present-Day Forms* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), *A Dictionary of Varieties of English* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), *Sociolinguistics in Ireland* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), *Listening to the Past: Audio Records of Accents of English* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), *The Cambridge Handbook of Areal Linguistics* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) and *English in the German-Speaking World* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

RUSSELL H. KASCHULA is Professor of African Language Studies at Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa. He has been awarded the Vice Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Teaching Award, as well as the Research Award. He holds the NRF SARChI Chair in the Intellectualisation of African Languages, Multilingualism and Education. He has published widely in the field of Applied Language Studies and Literature and he is an award-winning creative writer. Professor Kaschula is the 2019 Global South Senior Mellon Fellow at the American University in Cairo, Egypt.

HAIDEE KOTZE is Professor and Chair of Translation Sciences in the Department of Languages, Literature and Communication, University of Utrecht. She also holds a position as extraordinary professor in the research focus area Understanding and Processing Language in Complex Settings (UPSET), at the North-West University in South Africa. Her current research interests are in areas of language variation and change in contact settings, with an emphasis on both the psycholinguistic and social conditions of language contact. She is the co-editor of the journal *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*.

KAY MCCORMICK is an emeritus linguistics professor from the University of Cape Town who has worked on language contact and multilingualism in South Africa. Her major work is *Language in Cape Town's District Six* (Oxford University Press, 2002), which documented the linguistic diversity of this inner-city area. She also analysed the narrative structure of the hearings of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 1995, e.g. in 'Narrative inequality in the TRC hearings' (with Jan Blommaert, and Mary Bock), in *Discourse and Human Rights Violations* (John Benjamins, 2007).

DORRIT POSEL is a micro-economist who specialises in the analysis of South African micro-data. She is a distinguished professor of economics and holds the Helen Suzman Chair at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Dorrit Posel has published widely on issues related to the economics of language, as well as on marriage and family formation, labour force participation and migration, inequality and measures of well-being.

EDGAR W. SCHNEIDER is Chair Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Regensburg, Germany. He is an internationally renowned sociolinguist, known best for his 'Dynamic Model' (*Postcolonial English*, Cambridge University Press, 2007). He has published many articles and books, including *English around the World* (Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2019) and has lectured on all continents, including as keynote speaker in many instances. He edited the journal *English World-Wide* for many years and was president of the *International Society for the Linguistics of English*.

SILVESTER RON SIMANGO holds a PhD from the University of South Carolina. He is a professor and head of the Department of English Language and Linguistics at Rhodes University, South Africa, where he has worked since 2003. He specialises in the structure of language with a focus on Bantu morphology and syntax, as well as language contact phenomena such as code-switching, borrowing and contact-induced language change. His work has been published in *Language*, *Lingua*, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* and other leading journals.

CHRISTOPHER STROUD is a Senior Professor of Linguistics at University of the Western Cape and the Director for the Center for Multilingualism and Diversities Research. He is also a Professor of Transnational Multilingualism at Stockholm University. His research interests in the last decade have been around colonialities of multilingualism, language ideological debates, second language varieties of Portuguese and bilingual education programmes in Southern Africa. He is currently exploring the implications of a notion of linguistic citizenship as a southern approach to a politics of multilingualism.

BERTUS VAN ROOY has been with North-West University since April 1999, and professor of English linguistics since 2007. His current research focuses on grammatical variation and change that result from the influences of English and Afrikaans on each other, alongside a wider

List of Contributors

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interest in varieties of English across the world, and the factors that play a role in constraining language change in complex settings, such as bilingual language contact, translation and online communication.

RONEL WASSERMAN is a senior lecturer in English at the School of Languages of the Vaal Triangle Campus of the North-West University and a researcher in the research focus area Understanding and Processing Language in Complex Settings (UPSET). She specialises in corpus-based research within the domains of sociohistorical linguistics and World Englishes, especially relating to the grammatico-semantic development of South African English. Some of her publications focused on modality include articles in *English World-Wide* and *The Journal of English Linguistics*.

ELLA WEHRMEYER is a senior lecturer in Language Practice at the School of Language, North-West University, where she teaches interpreting studies, translation theory and literary translation. She holds a D. Litt et Phil from the University of South Africa. Her research focuses on sign language interpreting. She developed the first sign language interpreting corpus, as well as an annotation and notation system for text-based signed language corpus research. Her other research interests include eye-tracking studies and the development of theoretical models in translation and interpreting studies, on which she has published extensively in recent years.

CARIEN WILSENACH is an Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages at the University of South Africa. Her research interests include early literacy development in African languages, the development of cognitive-linguistic skills in African languages, bilingualism, biliteracy and reading disorders. She is currently leading a longitudinal research project entitled 'The Relationship between Cognitive-Linguistic Skills and Literacy Development in African Languages: A Longitudinal Investigation of Literacy Development in Northern Sotho, isiZulu and isiXhosa'. Her most recent publications concern phonological awareness and processing in reading by Northern Sotho children.

JOCHEN ZELLER is Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. He is interested in the biological foundations of language, and most of his research is concerned with the empirical description and theoretical analysis of the grammar of Bantu languages, but he has also worked on sociolinguistic topics, such as

South African Indian English, English language proficiency, and language shift in South Africa. Jochen Zeller has written two books and published in a wide range of national and international journals.

SABINE ZERBIAN has held research and teaching positions at the University of Potsdam (Germany), the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (South Africa), and the now Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft (Berlin, Germany), and is currently professor of English linguistics at the University of Stuttgart (Germany). Her area of expertise is in suprasegmental phonology, including tone in Tswana, a South African language, and intonation in English and German. A major research interest lies in the consequences of language contact for the production, perception and processing of intonation. She has published her research in journals such as *Phonetica*, *English World-Wide*, *South African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, as well as in edited collections.

Preface

The present volume represents a collection of studies on the English language in South Africa, in contact with a wide diversity of other languages, which are part of the linguistic landscape of this multilingual country. Since the advent of modern democracy in the early 1990s, South African society has been transformed and with it the many languages spoken there.

The main scholar associated with the study of language in South Africa is Rajend Mesthrie and it is to him that this volume is dedicated. He is the author of many seminal linguistic works, such as his study of language contact and shift in his native community of South African Indians. The scope of his scholarly work is considerable. It encompasses studies of many forms of English, including the most recent varieties, of tsotsitaal youth language, of the pidgin Fanagalo, of language contact and areal linguistic scenarios in South Africa and of Bhojpuri, the variety of Hindi from north-west India spoken by large numbers of the original Indian immigrants to South Africa. Beyond his own country he is known for work on sociolinguistics and on World Englishes, reaching out in no small way to the wider community of language students and scholars alike.

In the preparation of this volume I was fortunate in having, once again, the editorial help of Helen Barton at Cambridge University Press. Professor Merja Kytö from Uppsala University offered her professional assistance, without which the volume would not have gone so smoothly to completion. My thanks go to Ian Bekker and Yolandi Ribbens-Klein for their advice on the Timeline for South African History and on the Glossary; any shortcomings are obviously my own responsibility. To all these, and to the contributors to the volume, who made this possible in the first place, I am very grateful.

Raymond Hickey