

REPORT ON THE ACADEMIC EXCHANGE PROGRAMME FOR 2012
UNDER THE UM-UWC LINKAGE PROGRAM

Names of collaborators

Prof Vicki Carstens (UM) and Dr Loyiso Mletshe (UWC)

Project name

Distribution of DPs and properties of subjects in Bantu Languages

Synopsis of project objectives

The project focused on the distribution of nominal expressions, determiner phrases (DPs), in null subject languages so as to determine their characteristics in morpho-syntactic relations with special reference to Xhosa preverbal subject position. Previous studies by linguists such as Baker 1996, 2003 & Schneider –Zioga 2007 have maintained that Bantu preverbal subjects exhibit A(argument) properties and are always topicalized or left dislocated. This view by these linguists has not been conclusive in so far as demonstrating how DPs behave in other languages such as Xhosa.

The primary goal of the project was to examine the DP properties of a range of Bantu languages so as to establish the similarities and areas of divergence in these languages. This meant that we had to look at non-Bantu Niger – Congo and Afro- Asiatic languages as such a study would provide a considerable data for further analyses thereby enabling us to test our findings. To achieve this goal the project had to compile a generic Xhosa data which dealt with the properties of the subject in all its manifestations. A questionnaire was compiled to engage the native speakers of Xhosa on these pertinent issues without being pedagogic on the participants.

Statement of project accomplishments:

During my exchange visit to the UM we were able to achieve our goals as set out in the project proposals. In fact my visit achieved more than I expected as can be illustrated by the following deliverables:

- The visit enabled me to have unhindered time to engage with my collaborator (Prof V. Carstens) wherein we were able to analyze the data we had compiled for the project.
- We were able to work on our collaborative conference paper which had been organized by Prof Carstens to coincide with my visit at the UM, culminating in the co-presentation of the paper at the conference.

The format of the conference was structured to run for two days, 22 & 23 June 2012. On the first day of the conference presentations focused on the syntax of Bantu languages in general. We co-presented a paper based on our project which was titled 'Implications of impersonals and passives in Xhosa'. The paper dealt with contemporary theoretical issues relating to the definiteness effects (DEs) in empty categories (ECs). It also dealt with how to solve the impossibility of pronominalizing any DP but the subject, as well as how to account for the restrictions on experience verbs. The paper was well received by the conference participants and the comments that followed helped into investigating the salient issues that may have needed some clarity.

The second day of the conference had four sessions and the papers presented ranged from syntax, phonology and socio-linguistics, all on African languages.

- During my visit we made much progress in the writing of our collaborative research article for journal publication.
- The project has opened up other cross-linguistic research areas, including an inquiry into the grammar of ideophones, which have not been adequately explored in languages like Xhosa and other Bantu languages.
- During my visit we were able to work intensively on the questionnaires on 'DP positions in African Languages' and the other one on 'Situating the subject in Bantu'. These will be placed in an electronic archive available to all linguists on the NSF-funded Rutgers-based website (www.africananaphora.rutgers.edu/). Together with our conference presentations, our journal article in progress, these questionnaires demonstrate the considerable scope and impact resulting from our collaboration.

Project follow-up

I plan to continue working with my collaborator, Prof V. Carstens, so as to realize the publication of articles emanating from our project. I am of the view that I can build on the initial research foundation laid as a leverage to conduct further research. As a start, I plan to prepare a paper for conference presentation based on some of the salient issues emanating

from our project. As the initial project mature I intend to focus on publishing the results in South African publication outlets.

I hereby conclude that my visit to the UM has achieved its purpose as spelt out above. The goals of the project can only be realized through continuing exchange of ideas between the collaborators.

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to thank the sponsors of THE UM-UWC LINKAGE PROGRAM without whose support my visit to the US would have been mission impossible.

Secondly, my thanks go to Prof Rodney Uphoff and Ms Brenda Dennis for their steadfast work in seeing to it that my visit to the US was rescheduled after my Visa hiccups.

Thirdly, thanks are also due to the staff in the office of International relations at UWC, particularly, Ms Debra Lamson who worked tirelessly in tying up the loose ends for my visit.

Last by no means least, I owe my collaborator, Prof Vicki Carstens, a debt of gratitude for whose initiative and guidance this project would not have seen the light of day. Throughout my stay in the US she was an excellent host. For that, I take off my hat, Enkosi mama kaJessie.