

of rejection can be embarrassing, and sometimes are nasty. I was just discussing my paper with one man on the phone (here in Hong Kong) who said that sometimes manuscript reviewers make certain comments which, in effect, question how the author got his...degree. /---/. Another funny thing that I discovered during my recent trip to Ghana is this: some academics are rather more interested in excuses. They make very little effort or none at all to publish but are quick to say that...those who are outside (for now) publish quite a lot because it is...easier?... I had to tell one such person that it is not all African academics outside who have published quite a lot and it thus cannot be that easy.... It was at that point that I noticed this lame excuse. So in pursuing that project about reasons why Africans on the continent get rejected one should be careful not to encourage such lame excuses. One should encourage them to know that with hard work they can successfully compete with anyone anywhere in the world....”

Because of the embarrassment element we anticipate as one constraint, among many others, that it will not be easy to get access to some accounts of rejected scripts, particularly those bordering on personalia and privacy — accounts that may, if revealed, be damaging to the intellectual involved. One such person, now resident in Sweden, hinted at that quite recently. He would not like the public to know the details of the rejection aspect of his until now unsuccessful efforts to be published in American (US) journals. If however the rejected script was later published with success, we expect the earlier personally damaging rejection to be easily made available.

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Travelling and Seeing the World.

BOOK REVIEWS

LARS-GUNNAR ANDERSSON AND TORE JANSON.
**LANGUAGES IN BOTSWANA: LANGUAGE ECOLOGY IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA.**

Gaborone: Longman Botswana. ISBN 99912-73-99-9, 1997.
204 pp. incl. maps and tables.

JOUNI F. MAHO. **FEW PEOPLE, MANY TONGUES: THE
LANGUAGES OF NAMIBIA.**

Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan. ISBN 0 99916-0-086-8, 1998.
222 pp. incl. maps and tables.

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An introductory book on languages of an African country is still a rare phenomenon. There is no doubt about the need of this kind of information, however. It just happens that the writing of such books does not seem have high priority among experts in African linguistics, and for non-linguists the writing of such books would be almost an academic suicide. The two books reviewed here reveal what can be achieved by strong determination to bring the project to the end. At the same time they show the utmost vulnerability of the subject. What to include and what to exclude, and how to organize the material chosen to be presented? And how to deal with gaps in source material?

One can get a glimpse at the difficulties involved by looking at a series of language surveys, carried out in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia in the 1970s. In those, the attempt to describe the languages themselves was abandoned, and the voluminous books contain a number of articles on the language situation, language use, and the role of languages in education and media. An example of how huge task it is to carry out a linguistically ambitious survey of the languages of the whole country is the Kenya Language Atlas project, initiated by the University of Cologne and University of Nairobi in the 1970s. A number of books on individual languages have been produced in that series, but there is no satisfactory treatment of the languages of the whole country available. And it is doubtful whether such one is possible in a country with over 60 different languages. A country like Tanzania, with more than 125 languages, is still more worse off.

Taking into account the difficulty of this kind of work, one can only congratulate the authors for their achievement. The fact that the two countries surveyed, Botswana and Namibia, are sparsely populated, having less than 1% of the population of Africa, does not diminish the value of the work. Both of them have languages belonging to two entirely different language types, Bantu and Khoisan, and this complicates the task a great deal.

When evaluating these two works we have to keep in mind the target group, the readers. Both of the books have been intended as a first introduction to matters, which cannot be characterized briefly and precisely. In order not to do injustice to either of the works, in the following I shall comment on both of them separately.

Languages in Botswana (by Lars-Gunnar Andersson and Tore Janson)

This book has two authors, Lars-Gunnar Anderson and Tore Janson. The choice of writing a joint publication has a good motivation in that the former concentrates on Khoisan languages and the latter on Bantu languages. After a general introductory section there is an overview of Bantu languages, followed by a condensed description of each of the languages, namely Setswana, Setswapong, Sekgagadi, Ikalanga, Otjiherero, Thimbukushu, and Sesubiya. The speaker groups of various languages are quite different in size, Setswana being the first language for about 80% of the people in the country. However, the basic treatment of each language follows the same pattern. Speakers and their history is described, as well as the development of each language into a written form, as far as this applies. Then follows a linguistic description of the language, including phonology, the writing system, morphology, and syntax. In the end of each section there are numbers from one to ten, a few sample words and sentences with interlinear morphological analysis and English translation, and finally a piece of sample text with English translation. This pattern is followed more or less in the same form for all the languages.

Then follows a corresponding section of Khoisan languages, which, however, is quite differently organized. In it, certain themes for all languages are discussed under one heading, and comparison of languages is made in regard to features dealt with under these headings. Why the organization is so different in these two sections of the book is not clear. It is hard to judge which type of presentation is better. The organization applied in the section of Bantu languages holds information on each language together, but at the same time the comparison with other languages suffers. The section of Khoisan languages makes extensive use of comparison by proceeding theme by theme, while at the same time taking several, but not all, languages into consideration. But the cost is that information on each language is dispersed under several headings. In fact, one could say that

this book exhibits the basic problem of presenting linguistic data in a situation where several languages have to be described at the same time.

The position of English and Afrikaans in Botswana is described briefly. There is also discussion on Tsotsitaal and Fanagalo, both of which are in the role of lingua franca, without proper native speakers. Some critical comments on their typology are refreshing.

One should also remember that some of the languages described here were earlier so poorly studied and documented that without field-work by the authors some languages should obviously have been left out.

There are a number of maps showing the location of each language group. The maps are quite simple, but sufficient for the purpose.

In all, for a linguist used to read detailed descriptions of a language, this book may be a disappointment. So little is said and the style is in many places naively simple. But one has to remember that it is intended also for readers, who have no previous knowledge about linguistics or about African languages.

Few People, Many Tongues (by Jouni Maho)

This book on the languages of Namibia tries to reach two types of readers: those with little earlier knowledge of the people and languages of Namibia, and those who already are acquainted with Namibian people and languages. Although there is an overview of quite different topics, such as history, geographical setting of Namibia, activities of missionaries, and of the population, yet the book is clearly a linguistic overview. It aims at being, not exhaustive, but comprehensive.

Although the author was in Namibia for four months in 1991 and two weeks in 1994, the work does not seem to include actual field-work. It is based on written sources, and the list of literature in the end is really impressive, a very important part of the book. Nevertheless, at least one central book is missing, that is, *Ndonga-English Dictionary* by ELCIN Language committee in Oniipa (1996).

Taking into account the complexity of the work, the outlay of the book is quite clear and logical. The author does not try to describe each individual language, but rather takes a comparative approach. This solution makes it possible to avoid the unnecessary repetition of details in closely related languages, and at the same time distinct features can be described in more detail. The tables showing corresponding features of each of the Bantu languages, for example, are quite illuminating. Such tables have been constructed for noun class prefixes and for common pairings of noun classes, as well as for verbal extensions. On the other hand, comparative tables are missing for pronominal concords and, more importantly, for subject concords prefixed to verbs. The neglect would not be fatal if it would not hide the fact that in Table 8 (p. 74) there is a systematic error. It

there is a clear difference. It has to be so, because semantic accuracy requires marking somewhere else, if the *sg/pl* opposition is not marked in the noun. Furthermore, the noun class pairings for Kiswahili, taken for comparison in Table 8, are defective. Such pairings as 11/10, 11/6, and 11/0 are missing. It is also doubtful whether the result of merging proto-Bantu classes 11 and 14 should be 14. In most grammars of Kiswahili it is 11.

On the part of verbs there is a comparative table on verbal extensions. By using this term one avoids the problem of making a distinction between inflection and derivation. What is after the verb root is extension. However, it is interesting to note that while most of the verbal extensions belong to the category of derivation, there are also inflectional extensions. Marking for passive /w/ is an inflectional category, as well as perfect and habitual marking, which also may be found as extensions.

One interesting thing which is missing in the book is the set of rules for forming verb-forms. While verbal extensions are discussed in some detail, although by no means exhaustively, the inflectional part of verbs is poorly presented. Although the full description of all verb morphemes would not have been within the limits of this book, a schematic sketch of verb morpheme slots for each language would have been valuable. The fact that the orthographies of many of the languages unfortunately treat the set of verbal prefixes as separate words is no excuse. Grammatically verbal prefixes are parts of verbs and they should be treated as such.

The other language family, Khoisan (Khoesaaan in this book), is described by first giving a brief outlay of this language group in general. Then each of the groups of language speakers is described briefly. The linguistic description is given entirely on the comparative level, by describing each of the major linguistic features for the whole language group. Phonology and especially the clicks get a more thorough treatment than other features. The comparative approach is certainly the best solution in such a condensed description as this.

The Indo-European languages are also discussed as an important part of linguistic reality in Namibia. Although those languages were introduced, and first used, by the settlers coming from Europe, the languages, especially Afrikaans, spread also among the non-European population and were subject to heavy influence by local languages. Some additional issues, including the position of various languages in Namibia today, are discussed in the end of the book.

The outlay of the book makes it quite readable. The maps, although quite simple in design, help the reader in locating the speakers of the languages. But why should the cover design be so horrible?

In sum, the book includes pieces from a wide variety of subjects related to language in Namibia. It is a trade-off between accuracy of description and coverage of the subject matter on one hand, and readability on the other hand. The author has managed fairly well in balancing between the two. I would emphasize,

however, that the book is meant as a first introduction to the languages of Namibia, not as a standard reference work. For a linguist there is very little to find, except for the excellent literature list, which is just superb.