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# Editors' Preface

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In 2016 the Department of Linguistics and Language Practice at the University of the Free State hosted the Fifth Southern African Microlinguistics Workshop (SAMWOP-5) in Bloemfontein.[1] The SAMWOP series of workshops aims to bring together work focussing on microlinguistic approaches to language structure as the object of study, as opposed to approaches which focus on discursive objects of study or the function of language in society, for example. We are hopeful that this workshop will continue to play a role in nurturing research on microlinguistics in general and research on African languages in particular.[2]

The workshop was well attended with 19 presentations, many of them by student presenters. Significantly, 14 papers focussed on Bantu languages, two on Afrikaans and two on Khoesan, placing the emphasis firmly on African languages. This is particularly important because, in the context of Transforming and Decolonizing the linguistics curriculum (LSSA/SAALA 2016) – topics which generate much discourse around the production of knowledge within Southern African Higher Education -- microlinguistic approaches play an important, and potentially transformative role in equipping students and researchers with theoretical tools with which to explore the range of linguistic diversity that surrounds them (Mesthrie, De Vos, Hunt & Motinyane 2018).

Furthermore, it is necessary to emphasise to students of linguistics, the academy and the public at large that African languages continue to be recognized for the roles they play in shaping theory (Henderson 2011) so that future generations of students and researchers from Africa can see themselves as agentively contributing to a genuinely global theoretical debate (Mesthrie, De Vos, Hunt & Motinyane 2018). By drawing on linguistic theory and methods that are developed in a global context and with input from diverse theorists and languages,

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[1] SAMWOP-5 was also supported by a Seed Funding Grant from the Linguistics Association of Southern Africa.

[2] Note that we intend the term "African languages" to be inclusive in its coverage of languages of Africa. This would include, for instance, Afrikaans and its varieties, languages of the various Khoesan families, as well African varieties of languages formerly introduced during the colonial period.

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microlinguistic approaches are also useful in realizing the commonly posed dictum that Higher Education ought to be globally relevant and locally engaged.

**Timothy Mathes** and **Andy Chebanne's** paper looks at high tone raising and lowering in Tsua, an Eastern Kalahari Khoe language. They point out that, although voiced and aspirated obstruents are quite commonly tone depressors in several languages, Tsua also exhibits a typologically rare pattern where a glottal fricative acts as a depressor. Tsua is also unusual in having three depressor types in the same language. They also demonstrate that high tones are raised to super high tones in the context of high vowels. The paper provides spectrograms of the six tonal melodies of Tsua and considers some possibilities for how tone depression developed in the language. While voiced obstruents may contribute to tone lowering through a [+slack] feature, it is less clear that this analysis carries over to lowering triggers such as aspirated obstruents and glottal fricatives. They suggest that lowering by glottal fricatives may be attributable to language contact with the neighbouring language, Ikalanga.

**Xiaoxi Liu** and **Nancy Kula** provide a detailed and comprehensive comparative overview of depression effects in Bantu, Khoisan and Chinese Wu. They point out that although these languages are often studied in relative isolation, it is comparatively rare that results are compared across all three. Although depressors are often assumed to be [+voice], their review shows that depressor effects are caused by a much wider set of consonants. Unmarked depressors include voicing and breathiness while marked depressors include voiceless aspirated phones and voiceless unaspirated depressors. They draw particular attention to the laryngeal settings of voiceless unaspirated depressors. Depressors come from a wide variety of types including voicing, breathiness, voicelessness and aspiration which strongly suggests that the single feature [+voice] cannot account for the range of phenomena attested and emphasizes the need for more research in this area.

The research of both **Xiaoxi Liu & Nancy Kula** and **Timothy Mathes & Andy Chebanne** in particular speaks to the difficulties posed for traditional feature-based theoretical analyses of lowering phenomena (in terms of vowel height and tone respectively) when challenged by empirical, cross-linguistic data.

**David Barassa's** research explores Advanced Tongue Root (ATR) harmony in Ateso, an Eastern Nilotic language spoken in Uganda and parts of Western Kenya. Ateso's nine phonemic vowels can be characterized by the features High, Mid, Low, Back and ATR. It is the ATR feature that divides the vowels into two harmonic sets, characterized by [+ATR] and [-ATR] respectively. Interestingly, the [-ATR] group has five vowels whereas the [+ATR] group only has four, having lost [+ATR] /ä/. He focusses on the vowel /a/ as being important in this asymmetry. Other languages in the Teso-Turkana group also have nine vowels but have completely lost /ä/; in contrast, Ateso has lost /ä/ as a phoneme but retains it as an allophonic realization of /a/ conditioned by ATR. He demonstrates that /a/ behaves like a [-ATR] vowel and that although ATR affects tongue height ATR is not primarily a determinant of tongue height per se but rather of the position of the tongue root. Finally, he shows that Ateso ATR vowel harmony has two dimensions. One, is the condition that vowels ideally belong to [-ATR] or [+ATR] set within a word (Root Control). There is also a dynamic dimension where ATR qualities may change as a result of affixation (Feature Control and Mid-Vowel Assimilation).

In this initial survey, **Elias Malete** looks at how constituent negation operates in Sesotho from a syntactic perspective. Sesotho has no means of negating a constituent directly by merging a negative head to a nominal, but must rather express this meaning in other ways. He provides examples of a variety of constructions including declaratives, clefts, pseudo-clefts, locatives and negated versions of these. He shows that constituent negation of subjects is achieved by negative clefts and pseudo-clefts. He proposes that the Negation heads *ha*, *se* and *sa* project a NegP in Sesotho clause structure dominating AgrSP but below TP. In negation constructions a negative copulative verb *se* head-raises to Neg$^0$.

## References

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