

Argentine Afrikaners: Interrogating Hybridity in a Unique Diasporic Community

2. Describe your research project including the questions that motivate the research, your approach and the anticipated outcomes. (1000 words)

How can we understand the persistence of archaic or conservative socio-cultural practices in hybrid communities in the diaspora? How does the experience of exile and immigration manifest itself in ideological, cultural, and linguistic terms? In this project, we will examine the practices of a unique settlement in Patagonia, Argentina, which presents an exceptional situation of cultural and linguistic contact between Afrikaans and Argentine-Spanish communities. At the end of the second Anglo-Boer War in 1902, approximately 600 Afrikaners who were unwilling to live under British rule left South Africa and settled in Patagonia, bringing with them a traditional Calvinist worldview as part of the conservative Dutch Reformed Church. In Argentina, they lived in relative isolation, resisting integration into the Roman Catholic majority both by preserving their Protestant practices and by maintaining the linguistic structures typical of early twentieth-century Afrikaans. After several decades in which Afrikaans was the only language spoken in this community, Spanish gradually became dominant in the second half of the twentieth century. Currently, Afrikaans is spoken only by the oldest generation, with as few as forty fluent speakers remaining, among whom preservation of traditional Calvinism has been the strongest. Our study examines the only community in the world in which Spanish and Afrikaans have coexisted over multiple generations. Our work is timely as the shifts from Afrikaans to Spanish and from Calvinism to Roman Catholicism are advancing so rapidly that the current oldest generation represents the last group of fluent bilingual speakers and includes the last members of the Dutch Reformed Church in Argentina. As these are disappearing from the community, we consider the vitality of the ideological practices of Afrikaner culture in twenty-first-century Argentina.

To our knowledge, only one small study has been published on the language of this community, which focuses primarily on the place of Afrikaans in the daily lives of the speakers. Otherwise, no consideration has been given to their peculiar dialect of Afrikaans or to their theological tradition. Our research will fill this gap by interrogating the interactions between ideological and linguistic hybridity in this unique diasporic community.

In June 2014, Professors Coetzee, García-Amaya and Henriksen conducted fieldwork research in Patagonia and collected oral narratives from twenty Afrikaans-Spanish bilinguals and ten Spanish monolinguals, resulting in approximately twenty full hours of interviews in which subjects describe their experience, their beliefs, and their community. These narratives provide candid insight into their social and religious cultural practices while offering a wealth of unique speech data. Our project aims to study these oral narratives both for their linguistic structures and in terms of their ideological content, working to correlate their unique forms of linguistic and religious conservatism.

For our first goal, we will use digital resources to analyze the linguistic features of the data collected in 2014. We will use speech analysis software to generate phonetic data and create linguistic profiles for each of our bilingual speakers. These findings will enable us to quantify the extent to which there are hybrid patterns in the linguistic features of our speakers' two languages. Does a speaker's hybrid identity predict whether his/her speech patterns show greater influence from one of his/her languages than the other? How can the study of this isolated community refine our knowledge of issues related to language acquisition and language transfer? How can we characterize the peculiar archaic features preserved in their language?

For our second goal, we will analyze the testimonies to map out their social and cultural views, looking at how community members understand their own community of Dutch Calvinists in the context of the wider Roman Catholic majority. As we observed in 2014, the conflict between South African Dutch Calvinism and Hispanic Catholicism is a defining part of the Afrikaners' religious identity. We will consider how the rupture with South Africa conditioned the religious myths and practices of the community and ask how its members have been influenced by the acculturation of younger generations. We will also draw comparisons between the political and theological identities of Argentinian Afrikaners and South African Afrikaners who were raised under Apartheid. The ideology behind South African Apartheid, which was justified in theological terms by its proponents, developed decades after our Patagonian community left South Africa, and we are eager to compare the political-theological identities of these two groups of Afrikaners.

After analyzing the archive of oral narratives along linguistic and ideological lines, the team will work together to identify cultural or ideological factors that determine the nature and extent of linguistic hybridity between Afrikaans and Spanish in individual speakers. We suspect that a key determinant of their peculiar linguistic features may be a confluence of their cultural, political, and religious orientations. We will scrutinize the testimonies to determine if linguistic conservatism (use of archaic features, preservation of Afrikaans structures in Spanish, etc.) correlates to the traditional theological worldview of the speakers. Do the older community members holding more traditional religious views also display more traditional linguistic habits? Are examples of linguistic conservatism more prevalent in conversations discussing more traditional topics? Has social integration produced a simultaneous change in linguistic and religious habits? Because these questions can only be answered through a collaborative approach, our project demonstrates the value of research that integrates historical, cultural and linguistic methodologies in a single analytical frame.

During our fieldwork, community members voiced concern that their history and language would be forgotten once the last members of the community had passed on. Our third goal is therefore to develop a multilingual archive and website (in English, Spanish, and Afrikaans) that enables access to open-source applications containing video and sound clips, transcripts, and the history of the community. These will have three purposes: to disseminate our research findings; to publicize the community; and to serve as a teaching resource for students of Spanish, linguistics, and religious history. Moving forward, we intend to use the results to establish more detailed research questions and hypotheses for a future research trip to Patagonia under the Project Funding grant.

3. Describe your collaborative process. What will you work out or hope to accomplish during the Spring Term proposal development phase of your project? What is the anticipated role of graduate student collaborators, and what is your mentoring plan for graduate (and undergraduate, if relevant) students? (1000 words)

In order to delve into the confluence of factors that led to the current situation, it is imperative that we establish a cross-generational research team composed of linguists, philologists, religious historians, and experts in twentieth-century Argentina. The Collaboratory will afford us the opportunity to test how linguistic and cultural research traditions can both inform and challenge each other. Though linguistics research does take into account the socio-cultural identity of speakers, it seldom does so at the same level of sophistication as research in cultural studies. Similarly, cultural scholars do work with language as an integral part of cultural identity, but seldom at the same level of detail as linguists do. We expect that a deeper, more intense

collaboration between linguists and cultural scholars can lead to new insights and methodological innovations in both areas of study.

The research team will collaborate in two principal ways. Professors García-Amaya, Coetzee, Henriksen (the linguistics faculty of our team) and one of our GSRA collaborators will analyze the linguistic properties of our narrative corpus. At the same time, Professors Coetzee (who also has a background in religious studies and Calvinist theology), Szpiech (who studies translation and religion in the Hispanic world), and another of our GSRA collaborators will analyze the religious content of the interviews. After these two initial steps are complete, all six members will meet with Professors Alberto and Jenckes (cultural historians of the southern cone of South America) to combine the two streams of analysis with the goal of mapping the linguistic features onto the historical trends in worldview and theological expression. By working from two different angles toward a common point, the team will be able to provide a broader analysis of the narratives than could be achieved by any of the linguists, religious studies scholars, or cultural historians working in isolation.

The first step in the collaboration will use digital resources to carry out phonetic analysis. Prior to the spring term, we will interview graduate and undergraduate students who are trained in phonetic data analysis and who are also interested in learning the pronunciation patterns of Spanish and Afrikaans (we already have various qualified students in mind). We will spend the first week of the spring term mentoring and training these students in spectrographic analysis so that they can reliably tag our speech data for specific consonantal, vocalic, and prosodic properties. During week two, the team will begin meeting regularly in the Collaboratory space to design a systematic coding system in Praat (an acoustic analysis software) that can be used to tag the sound files from the 2014 trip. In subsequent weeks (meeting every two to three days in the Collaboratory space), the team will interrogate the data with regard to how the coded phonetic properties portray the hybrid identities of the speakers. This, in turn, will inform possible changes in the ongoing phonetic coding of the data. Since the graduate and undergraduate RAs will be more familiar with the data (due to being the primary data coders), their participation in these discussions will be indispensable. The GSRA collaborator will in turn provide further mentoring to the undergraduate collaborators in weekly meetings to address any questions related to the linguistic analysis, i.e., establishing timelines, sharing sound files, conducting inter-rater reliability tests, etc. Now that RLL has a solid track of undergraduate courses in Spanish Linguistics, there are many undergraduate students who are eager to work on projects of the type described in this proposal. We would also be delighted to supervise the undergraduates in working with this corpus for a thesis project (during academic year 2017–2018).

Simultaneous to this, Professors Szpiech, Coetzee, and the second GSRA collaborator (who will also be hired in consultation with Professor Alberto prior to the Spring term) will analyze the transcripts for religious content. Professors Szpiech and Coetzee will together mentor and train the GSRA collaborator (ideally a student from History or Anthropology specializing in Protestantism in Latin America) to analyze the transcripts and identify excerpts relating to questions of exile, identity, belief, and religion. In biweekly meetings in the Collaboratory space and in ad hoc meetings to address any further mentoring issues that arise, the three will work together to index the content of the recordings according to questions of religious practice, theology, and perception of group identity and to tag the recordings according to the hybrid ideological and religious identities of the speakers. Where possible, tags facilitating future comparison with Apartheid in South Africa (e.g. race, segregation, Calvinist predestination, White supremacy, etc.) will be included. Professors Alberto and Jenckes will join at least one weekly meeting to add other relevant historical and cultural tags to the data.

After the data has been tagged by both teams (by week five or six), the entire group will meet regularly over the remaining weeks to collate the findings in order to identify the confluence of the linguistic and ideological patterns. Using our data, we will jointly discuss and analyze each interview individually to evaluate any possible manifestations of conservative linguistic and cultural practices. The joint analysis of the testimonies will also lead to the identification of current gaps in our data that we plan to address through follow-up interviews with our speakers via Skype when necessary. This analysis will lead to a crystallization of the specific approaches and themes that we want to explore in future stages of this project and allow us to integrate all of our findings in order to reshape or, if necessary, replace our original research questions. Altogether, the outcomes of this collaboration will form the foundation for planning a second fieldwork trip to Patagonia (through the Project Funding grant).

A third graduate student will also be hired to provide IT assistance in creating a dynamic archive for our project.

4. What contribution(s) will the project make to the humanities field(s) in which it intervenes, and to the humanities more broadly? How do you anticipate results will be communicated and to what audiences? (600 words)

By exploring how the linguistic particularities of Spanish and Afrikaans in Patagonia can be mapped onto a unique experience of religious conservatism and cultural isolation, our study will show how the Patagonian settlement presents a model for understanding cultural hybridity in the context of an endangered minority community. The socio-historical circumstances that led to the existence of this group are extremely rare and the linguistic case they present is unique. Studying and documenting their religious views and language together can therefore teach us about what happens to small, isolated communities more generally as they undergo the often painful process of cultural assimilation into a majority environment. It is crucial that any documentation project on the Afrikaners of this community (which represents, in our view, a goldmine of information about both traditional Calvinism and bilingualism in the Hispanic world) be done in the next ten to fifteen years, since younger members are either losing their religion or integrating into the Catholic majority, and Afrikaans itself is rapidly disappearing from the community. The mean age of participants from our 2014 trip was sixty-eight, and quite a few of our subjects were over eighty. Younger community members are Catholic and monolingual in Spanish, and there are no known plans for Afrikaans-language revitalization in the community. Because their isolated location and extreme poverty have not supported a tradition of visual or decorative art, almost all of the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual life of Patagonian Afrikaners has been experienced through language, as demonstrated through songs, prayers, poetry, greetings, and the conversational styles that have been adopted in the community. Ultimately, the loss of language varieties such as Patagonian Afrikaans alongside the disappearance of Dutch Reform Calvinism from Argentina limits what scholars can learn about human cognition and the complexities of the human mind in this unique context. By exploring the particularities of Spanish and Afrikaans-speaking Calvinists in Argentina, our study will show how the Patagonian context presents an elucidating model for understanding cultural hybridity and bilingualism in the context of an endangered minority community.

This project also speaks to the intersection of immigration and the formation of community identity, as we will compare the Afrikaner situation in Patagonia to analogous histories of displacement and exile, both past and present. Although unique in its religious and linguistic makeup, our Afrikaans-Spanish community is one in a long string of exiled, hybrid communities in the Hispanic world that can be traced back to the expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from the

Iberian Peninsula in 1492. Our exploration into the Afrikaans-Spanish community forges new ways of understanding histories of exile, migration, and hybridity. The connections that we make may also provide insight into the current migration and refugee crisis affecting Europe and North America, helping us understand what is at stake as modern nation-states continue to negotiate their own evolving hybrid identities.

This project will promote its archive and communicate its findings to a wide audience of Spanish-speaking Argentinians, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, Dutch-speaking Calvinists, and an international community of scholars and students of both religion and linguistics. By providing direct access to the actual footage of the interviews, as well as academic analysis (at least one journal article) and contextual tools (histories, timelines, maps, etc.) for pedagogical purposes, the online archive developed by this collaborative project will preserve voices from a unique and rapidly disappearing community and provide a resource for further scholarship in a variety of relevant fields.