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In the course of its historical development, Afrikaans has diverged from Dutch in many respects. Some of the historical changes have affected the phonological form of considerable parts of the sizeable originally Dutch lexical stock. One of the more salient differences concerns the fact that in Afrikaans, medial /y/, /v/, and /d/ have often been lenited or deleted, sometimes giving rise to alternations or the restructuring of stem forms. After long vowels etymological /y/ in intervocalic position has disappeared in items such as *reën*, Dutch 'regen', English 'rain', and *hoër*, D 'hoger', E 'higher'. Similarly /v/ has been weakened to /w/, phonetically [u] (in e.g. *briewe*, D 'brieven', E 'letters'; *sterwe*, D 'sterven', E '(to) die') or entirely disappeared (as in *aand*, D 'avond', E 'evening' and *oor*, D 'over', E 'over'). And similarly /d/ has been weakened to /j/ or /w/ (as in *paaie*, D 'paden', E 'paths' and *goue*, D 'gouden', E 'golden') or even completely disappeared (as in *zaal*, D 'zadel', E 'saddle' and *aar*, D 'ader', E 'vein'). This d-lenition is not entirely 'undutch', but otherwise these processes do not corroborate the superstrate view, according to which Afrikaans continued structural tendencies which were already present in the dialects of the 17th century Dutch colonists and settlers.

This talk will zoom in on the phonology of the lenition and deletion processes. After an analysis of the distribution of the processes, some of the morphological consequences will be sketched briefly.

The question will be addressed whether the lenition or deletion processes, which do not seem to have applied exceptionlessly, are lexically diffuse and, if so, which factors have conditioned the developments. To this end, a quantitative analysis of lexicographical data containing over 200 different items was carried out. The impact of lexical factors, such as token frequency, were studied in the light of claims from Usage Based approaches to phonology; the lenition and deletion of medial /d/ appear to be sensitive to usage frequency. In all, a number of probabilistic phonological, grammatical and lexical conditions were uncovered that provided insight into the rule-typological status of the processes.

On the contact linguistic side, attention will be paid to the distorting effects of early 20th century standard Dutch on the codification of the relevant lexical sets in standard Afrikaans. Some of the exceptions are due to sporadic reborrowing from Dutch.

Finally, the important role that was probably played by Khoekhoe speakers will be discussed. Cape Dutch Pidgin, one of the two main roots of modern Afrikaans, developed as a result of contact between 17th-century Dutch settlers and Cape Khoekhoen, who spoke Nàmá. Properties of the Nàmá phonology suggest that at least in Cape Dutch Pidgin, the obstruents that were subject to the lenition and deletion processes in question constituted a natural class.