

In comparison to Dutch, the vowel system of Afrikaans is notably less complex. The same may be said regarding the stress pattern of its simplex words. In this talk it will be shown how these two are interrelated. More in particular I shall demonstrate this with reference to a number of ways in which the position of stress in especially simplex words has been adapted in order to “normalise” the stress assignment pattern, that is, the tendency exists for the stress position in words longer than two syllables to move to the last stressable syllable. This happens in accordance with the pattern of words with typical Afrikaans simplexes. I shall indicate this with reference to the following phenomena: stress assignment in nonsense forms, acronyms, formation of person’s names, pronunciation of chains of numbers (e.g. telephone numbers), influence of stress attracting suffixes, a drift towards word end compared to the situation in Dutch, a similar move of primary stress in words in cases where the original meaning as compound-derivations has been lost, including in typical Afrikaans place names, in both the latter cases where the word is experienced as a new simplex.

The interplay between the three factors of segment composition, syllable structure and position of the relevant syllable will be discussed. It will be shown that the latter in most cases takes precedence over the other two.

Finally I shall reflect upon the characterisation of the stress pattern of Afrikaans as a whole: to what extent it might (still) be typified as a typical Germanic language with initial word stress?