



Afrikanistisches Kolloquium

Freitag, 07.06.2024 12-14 Uhr,
Campus Westend, Seminarhaus SH 2.103

Lee Pratchett (Kiel)

Grammatical gender in the playground: language variation amongst Ju|'hoan teenagers

The Kalahari Basin is a hotbed for grammatical gender systems of typologically different kinds. This includes the highly number-sensitive and sex-based systems of Khoekhoe and Naro (Khoe-Kwadi family), and the non-sex-based systems of Ju|'hoan (Kx'a family) and Taa (Tuu family), which are also only mildly sensitive to number. To this, one must add the iconic "Bantu gender type", e.g., Tswana and Herero, and the pronominal gender systems of European languages like Afrikaans and English.

In the description of Kalahari Basin Area languages, several studies attest to the impressive variation of gender systems in otherwise closely related dialects (see e.g., Kießling 2008 for Taa). In previous research, I demonstrate how language contact and language ideologies result in the subtle yet typologically significant innovation of sex-based genders in Ju|'hoan varieties (Pratchett 2021). Motivated by a desire to understand the spread of such features in younger generations, and to more fully describe language diversity, in this talk we explore new data on the gender systems of Ju|'hoan teenagers, which reveals striking divergence when compared to older generations. But how stable are these systems, and is it possible to know which languages are having the greatest impact on the evolution of grammatical gender in Ju|'hoan?

References:

- Kießling, Roland. 2008. Noun classification in !Xoon. In: Ermisch, Sonja (ed.), *Khoisan languages and linguistics: proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium, January 8-12, 2006, Riezlern/ Kleinwalsertal*, 225-248. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Pratchett, Lee J. 2021. An areal and typological appraisal of gender in Ju, STUF - *Language Typology and Universals*, 74(2): 279-302.

My research focuses predominantly on the languages of the Kalahari Basin Area, and I have made many trips to Namibia and Botswana as part of the documentation and description of Ju|'hoan, !Xun, and ǀ'Amkoe (Kx'a) as well as the Tshwa languages (Kalahari Khoe, Khoe-Kwadi). In addition to the structural typology of this Sprachbund, I am deeply interested in micro-level variation and how this relates to the contemporary and historical linguistic landscape. In recent years, I have also been able to engage more with other passion projects, particularly in the field of sociolinguistics and queer linguistics, and my current research even combines the performative styles of drag queens and clicks!

Fachbereich 09
Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft

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