Urban Youth Style or Emergent Urban Vernacular? The Rise of Namibia's Kasietaal

Abstract

This study discusses Kasietaal, a continuum of language practices associated with youth in the low-income areas of Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. To what extent does Kasietaal fit the description of an urban youth speech style or of a new lingua franca? To answer this question, this study discusses sociolinguistic perceptions of younger and older residents of Katutura, Windhoek's historically Black neighbourhood. It also uses linguistic materials produced by a Kasietaal performance elicited from a subset of the younger informants. The data suggest that Kasietaal is a post-independence phenomenon, with a manipulated lexicon of diverse origins as its most salient feature. But Kasietaal is not just a "floating lexicon" like South Africa's Tsotsitaal: It is tied to an Afrikaans variety with low-status lingua franca functions, with which it is likely to be co-evolving for want of other linguistic options for projecting urban inter-ethnic solidarity.

Keywords

Kasietaal; youth language; Namibia; language contact; Afrikaans; Tsotsitaal

1. Introduction

Emergent multicultural urban identities have increasingly been viewed through the prism of "urban youth languages," that is, subversive language practices in the form of speech styles whose original purpose is to creatively project "resistance identities" while typically manifesting membership of marginalised young and male communities of practice (CoPs). As African cities tend to form ethnolinguistically diverse environments where established high-status languages are historically exogenous and socially distant, they seem to offer more scope than Northern cities for emergent urban youth speech styles to outgrow their initial indexicalities and become part of—or lay the foundations for—ethnically neutral inter-ethnic lingua francas. This study generally looks at how urban youth speech styles emerge and how they diversify functionally. Its central object is Kasietaal, a continuum of language practices that are perceptually associated with youth in the low-income areas of Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. To what extent does Kasietaal fit the description of an urban youth speech style or of a new lingua franca? To answer these questions, a mixed methodological approach is taken which aims to elicit both sociolinguistic perceptions and linguistic materials. The perceptual data are primarily sourced from younger and older residents of Katutura, Windhoek's historically Black neighbourhood. The linguistic data are produced by a Kasietaal performance elicited from a subset of the younger informants.

The article is organised as follows: Section 2 presents the notion of youth language practices with a specific emphasis on Africa. Section 3 introduces Namibia's sociolinguistic ecology with an emphasis on Windhoek. Section 4 describes the data and the methodology. Section 5 describes perceived linguistic change in Katutura based on the older informants' accounts. Section 6 focuses on the

perceived sociolinguistic functions and linguistic features of what the younger informants label Kasietaal. Section 7 discusses its linguistic features based on an elicited Kasietaal performance. Finally, section 8 compares Windhoek's Kasietaal with other African urban youth speech styles, more specifically South Africa's Tsotsitaal.

2. Urban varieties versus youth styles

Cities have historically developed distinctive "vernacular" varieties, that is, varieties transmitted at an early age and accordingly "focused," which can be traced to dynamics of inter-dialectal levelling or koineisation between mutually intelligible dialects brought by migration from adjoining rural areas (Kerswill 2010; see further Labov 2001). Meanwhile, patterns of migration to cities have become increasingly multilingual whilst exhibiting distinctive "Northern" and "Southern" features. Ethnolinguistic diversification in the North has been taking place through mostly international immigration in national contexts where rural–urban migration has largely ceased, while the South has been experiencing ethnolinguistic diversification mostly through accelerating rural–urban migration in national contexts marked by high ethnolinguistic fragmentation (Freund 2007; Vertovec 2007). Urban sociolinguistic dynamics differs across North and South, too. In the former, high-status languages—historically linked to a long-established "native" majority—are adopted as target languages by shifting immigrant communities, while high-status varieties in—especially Sub-Saharan— Southern contexts tend to be historically exogenous, largely transmitted in educational settings, and to co-exist with indigenous languages. Early studies of language contact in Northern urban settings focused on the genesis of "ethnolects" among immigrant communities (Eckert 2008; Wölck 2002). Although new varieties in the postcolonial context used to be seen as necessarily "unfocused" due to their imputed L2 status, it is now held as a possibility that they may develop "vernacularised" features, often with emblematic value (Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008). The language behaviours of urban youth are recognised as an essential driving force behind spreading linguistic features, the study of which has, as a result, increasingly been overlapping with that of "(urban) youth languages" or "youth language practices."

Labov (2001) recognised an inclination among adolescents towards "non-conformist" language behaviours, some of which may survive age-grading and gradually spread to the wider community via socially mobile individuals, especially women. Ethnographic scholarship on youth language practices typically focuses on the more "non-conformist" language behaviours whose "anti-linguistic" functions make them appear age-bound and ephemeral (Cheshire et al. 2015; see further Halliday 1978). These functions are manifested by manipulative strategies at the lexical, morphological, and semantic levels, which—in the case of ethnolinguistically diverse settings—feed on fluid "translanguaging" practices, including "crossing" into other ethnolinguistic identities (Beyer 2015; Rampton 2017). Some of these practices may become enregistered as part of multimodal styles—indexically tied to young male members of marginalised multicultural CoPs—whose deployment reflects place-making strategies, that is, the appropriation of exclusive social spaces (Hollington and Nassenstein 2015; see further Cornips and De Rooij 2018). Although the linguistic component of these styles may undergo continuous recomposition to keep performing concealing functions, such as among gang subcultures, there is European evidence that some youth language practices with originally anti-linguistic functions have become part of "vernacularised," restructured varieties, as has notably been shown with Multicultural London English and Kiezdeutsch (Cheshire et al. 2013; Wiese 2009). That the same

potential for vernacularisation might apply to some Sub-Saharan African youth language practices is suggested by qualitative observations that innovative urban styles originally marked as young, male, marginalised, and subversive have been socially and functionally expanding.

Africa's urban language practices include "unmarked" mixed codes involving (colonial) lingua francas and indigenous languages, which simultaneously index social mobility and local or ethnic authenticity (Meeuwis and Blommaert 1998; Myers-Scotton 1993). Against this linguistic backdrop, the diffuse character of which makes it appear distinct from European contact settings (Beyer 2015), some emergent youth styles provide a space where both ideologies of cultural dominance and rigid ethnolinguistic ascriptions with rural indexicalities become safely contestable (Hollington and Nassenstein 2015). These language practices may eventually turn into alternative lingua francas, if not fully fledged urban vernaculars, as exemplified by Ivory Coast's Nouchi or Kenya's Sheng (Beyer 2015). What South African sociolinguistic literature calls Tsotsitaal (Mesthrie 2008) does not fit such characterisations. Although it may originally have performed some lingua franca functions in Johannesburg's former Western Areas townships (Mesthrie and Hurst 2013), it is in its current forms mostly described as a marked lexical style with male and "streetwise"—if not "delinquent"—indexicalities that is "performed" as part of a multimodal repertoire including clothing, gait, posture, and cultural iconographies. After reportedly being tied to Afrikaans, especially restructured varieties thereof that emerged among Bantu-speakers, the Tsotsitaal lexicon seems to have become transferable to a variety of Bantu languages, thus becoming a "floating lexicon" (Hurst 2015; Mesthrie and Hurst 2013). The present study looks at Kasietaal, which is Namibia's prima facie equivalent of Tsotsitaal yet is linguistically and functionally distinct from it as a result of specific characteristics of the social environment in which it emerged.

3. Namibia and Windhoek's sociolinguistic profile

Formerly known as Southwest Africa (SWA), Namibia is a sparsely populated Southern African country (ca. 2.3 million inhabitants) that was ruled by South Africa from 1915 to 1990 and prior to this by Germany from 1885 to 1915. Its pre-colonial population consisted of speakers of Bantu and Khoe-San languages, who were from the late 18th century joined by the Cape Dutch-speaking Oorlams, i.e. westernised Khoekhoen from the adjoining Cape Colony, and from the 19th century by Basters, a population group with a mixed European and Khoekhoe background (Maho 1998). The South African period saw a steady influx of Cape Coloureds and Afrikaners, with the latter becoming the majority of the European population. SWA experienced apartheid in a largely South African form following the Odendaal Commission (1962–1963): "Blacks," "Coloureds," and "Whites" were residentially separated and assigned specific socioeconomic positions: Whites were dominant, while Blacks and Coloureds were kept in a subordinate position, with the latter forming a socio-economically intermediate category[1]. The Blacks were spatially distributed according to their assigned ethnolinguistic background, namely, Ovambo, Herero, Kavango, Damara, Nama, Caprivian or Tswana. The Coloureds fell into two main designated ethnic groups, namely the Basters and the descendants of 20th century Cape Coloured migrants (Stell 2016; see further Pendleton 1993).

[1] SWA's last racial census (1981) reported 7% Whites, 8.5% Coloureds, and 84.5% Blacks (Van der Merwe 1983).

According to the last country-wide language survey (NSA 2017), Namibia's main language is Oshiwambo (50%), followed by Khoekhoegowab (11%, historically spoken According to the last country-wide language survey (NSA 2017), Namibia's main language is Oshiwambo (50%), followed by Khoekhoegowab (11%, historically spoken by the Damaras and Namas), Rukavango (10%), Afrikaans (9%, historically spoken by the Afrikaners and Coloureds), and Otjiherero (9%). Oshiwambo, Rukavango, and Otjiherero are Bantu, while Khoekhoegowab is Khoisan and Afrikaans is Germanic. Afrikaans—one of SWA's official languages alongside English and German, was the dominant inter-ethnic lingua franca south of the "Red Line" (Prinsloo et al. 1982)[2]. It became hegemonic in the civil service from 1948 onwards, when the National Party came to power in South Africa (UNIN 1986). With a historical Oshiwambo-speaking base, much of it in exile during the Border War and exposed to English (Williams 2017), the South West African People's Organisation declared English Namibia's sole official language upon assuming power in 1990 (Pütz 1995). In the current context, English and Afrikaans are perceived as high- and low-function lingua francas, respectively, while indigenous languages are confined to ethnic in-groups, as they already tended to be by the end of the South African period (Stell 2016; see further Prinsloo et al. 1982). While not finding evidence of a "Black Afrikaans" folk-linguistic label alongside the widespread labels "White" and "Coloured Afrikaans," Stell (2019; 2016) noted the use of the label Kasietaal (derived from Afrikaans *kasie* [location] referring to formerly designated Black residential areas, and *taal* [language]) to refer to ways of speaking Afrikaans specific to Windhoek, and, implicitly, to its Black population.

With roughly 325 000 inhabitants, Windhoek is the country's largest city, distantly followed by the Walvis Bay-Swakopmund conurbation and Oshakati (NPC 2012). Under German rule, Windhoek's indigenous population mainly consisted of Hereros and Damaras, who resided on the fringes of the European settlement (Peyroux 2004). During the 1960s, the Blacks and Coloureds were resettled in the newly built Katutura and Khomasdal areas, respectively, with the former systematically planned into ethnic blocks (Pendleton 1993). Meanwhile, immigration from the Oshiwambo-speaking districts, where most of SWA's population was concentrated, was contained: Ovambos were in most cases only allowed to reside temporarily in southern urban areas as (male) contract workers. As apartheid regulations were being dismantled from the 1980s onwards, Windhoek's Ovambo population grew dramatically while Katutura became more ethnolinguistically mixed outside its initial core (Simon 1991). Another hallmark of post-independence Windhoek is the large informal settlements that have been emerging on Katutura's western fringes, where rural migrants tend to first settle (Friedman-Mueller 2006). More than 40% of Windhoek's population are migrants, most of them from the Oshiwambo-speaking districts (NSA 2017). This is the sociodemographic backdrop against which Kasietaal may have developed, either as an urban youth style or as an Afrikaans-based lingua franca among the historically Black population. This study aims to uncover which of the two characterisations best fits Kasietaal.

4. Methodology

The methodological approach is "mixed" in that it aims to use emic perspectives on language and to elicit linguistic materials. Fifty-four informants were recruited, 31 males and 23 females. The primary

[2] The "Red Line" was a veterinary cordon fence insulating the White settlement from Kaokoveld, Ovamboland, Kavangoland, and Caprivi (Miescher 2012).

informant sample consists of 30 Grade 12 Katutura residents recruited from a government school on Windhoek's historically non-White West side. These informants were 13 Ovambos, 6 Hereros, 8 Damara-Namas, 2 Kavangos, and 1 Caprivian. Three control samples were recruited: 4 Coloureds from the Grade 12 cohort of a Khomasdal school, 5 learners from a private school (1 Damara, 1 Coloured, 1 Ovambo, and 2 White Afrikaans-speakers), and finally, 15 informants aged 60+ with an urban experience of the apartheid regime (1 Ovambo, 5 Hereros, 5 Damara-Namas, 1 Coloured, and 3 White Afrikaans-speakers)[3]. The young informants were administered semi-directed interviews focused on their language perceptions and practices. The interviews administered to the older informants sought to elicit perspectives on change in youth language practices since the apartheid era. The scenarios to be tested are as follows: (1) Kasietaal is a distinctive speech style that can be specifically linked to young male Katutura residents, thus qualifying it as an "urban youth language" or (2) Kasietaal is a more or less focused new urban vernacular spearheaded by Katutura youth in general. If (1) holds true, Kasietaal's linguistic features are likely to form a "floating lexicon" akin to Tsotsitaal. If (2) holds true, Kasietaal is likely to involve a stable core lexicon grammatically anchored to (a possibly restructured variety of) Afrikaans. Essential to determining which scenario is valid is establishing perceived degrees of co-occurrence between language practices and other social behaviours that co-constitute styles. Beginning with informants' self-reported perceptions and behaviours, the description of Kasietaal is complemented with (1) lists of Kasietaal items elicited via questionnaires from the young Katutura sample as "Kasie words that you use yourself" and (2) the linguistic analysis of a Kasietaal performance given by three self-declared proficient Kasietaal users from the young Katutura sample, the translation of which is performed with the assistance of the participants[4].

5. From Old Location to Katutura: Kasietaal's Shifting Sociolinguistic Background

Either born there or moving there from rural areas at an early age, the elderly informants shared memories of Old Location, the settlement that housed most of Windhoek's Black and Coloured population until the late 1960s[5]. On its southern side lay the Damara and Nama sections, as well as a Baster section. On its northern side lay the Herero sections, a small Ovambo section, and a "mixed" section associated with South African immigrants, whom the informants call "Zulus," "Xhosas," and "Upington people." Some informants emphasise ethnic polarisation in Old Location. The Hereros stood out for their close connection to cattle, which they tended in their reserves during weekends or grazed in the municipality's commonage. Their ethnocentric behaviour was reflected in endogamous behaviours, as well as disregard for other ethnic groups, especially the less cattle-rich Damaras whom "the Hereros did not consider … as people" (HE-M-2)[6]. Polarisation between Hereros and Damaras may also have derived from conflicting senses of historical land ownership (e.g. "This had been Damara land," DA-M-2)[7]. In turn, the Basters and Coloureds—who were legally allowed to live in White areas— were ascribed a higher status (e.g. "They were like White people," HE-M-1) and were seen as

[3] Both male and female informants were sought for each ethnolinguistic group. However, the Kavangos and Caprivians are only represented by males. Only one (White Afrikaans-speaking) male informant could be recruited at the private school. In the older control sample, the Coloured informant is female and the Ovambo informant male.

[4] Ethical approval for this study was obtained under the reference HSEARS20200329005.

[5] The details given by the informants were checked for their consistency with Wagner (1951) and Pendleton (1993).

[6] Informants are referred to via abbreviations of their self-reported ethnonyms joined with "F" (female) or "M" (male) , and an identifying number. The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans or Otjiherero.

[7] In pre-colonial times, Windhoek's site was located on the boundary between Oorlam and Herero spheres of influence. It was inhabited only by Damaras at the beginning of German rule (Kotzé 1990).

keeping their distance (e.g. “They hanged out with the Whites,” HE-M-4). Still, ethnic boundaries could be bridged, such as in residential patterns (“Hereros lived among us [Damaras] and our people also lived among them [Hereros],” DA-F-4). Interethnic unions did occur—as illustrated by DA-F-3 whose father was Ovambo—but often implied absorption into another ethnic group. All recall inter-ethnic socialisation occurring at the main three local schools, which accommodated ethnically diverse learner populations although the labels “Nama school,” “Herero school,” and “Baster school” emerge during the interviews to refer to them. Reported spaces of inter-ethnic socialisation for adults in Old Location notably include the dance evenings held at the community hall on weekends, the bar and illegal pop-up liquor stands, mostly frequented by men, as well as the occasional illegal political rally. More inter-ethnic socialisation between Old Location residents occurred in the workplace, where most informants recall teaming up with other ethnicities.

The Black informants only name indigenous languages as their childhood home languages. Their first exposure to Afrikaans occurred at the Old Location schools that they attended. The Old Location’s lingua francas are named as Afrikaans and Otjiherero—the latter especially between Hereros and Ovambos—and, less commonly, between Hereros and Damara-Namas. Outside Old Location, Afrikaans and, marginally, German are named as the main lingua francas with White employers. Afrikaner employers provided native Afrikaans models: HE-M-1 and OV-M-1 believe that they learned their Afrikaans mostly from them. Also visible were the varieties of Basters and Coloureds, who were present at all Old Location schools and were often foremen in workplaces. HE-M-4 and DA-F-3 explain that they learned much of their Afrikaans from Basters or Coloureds in their neighbourhood, which makes DA-F-3 describe her Afrikaans variety as “Baster Afrikaans.” Among the Blacks, the Damara-Namas appeared more adept at Afrikaans, to the point that the Hereros “wanted us [Damaras] to act as their interpreters” in the workplace (DA-F-3)[8]. The Damara-Namas seemed to play an important role in transmitting Afrikaans, such as by teaching it to recently arrived Ovambo contract workers who at first typically “spoke nothing but Oshiwambo” (AF-M-1). Though acknowledging the preponderance of Afrikaans (which was always “plain” and “unmixed” in DA-F-2’s opinion) in inter-ethnic contexts, the Damara and Herero male informants hint at code-switching practices involving indigenous languages. Among them, HE-M-4 was used to conversations where “you would start in Afrikaans and then switch into Otjiherero,” while the Damaras name Khoekhoegowab words that they use in their Afrikaans and that the Hereros would borrow. Finally, English was occasionally, albeit rarely, spoken as Blacks were deterred from practising it. DA-F-2 recalls how the police would visit her school daily to ensure that the teacher was not using English in class. Speaking English was even physically dangerous: “If the Boere caught you speaking English, they would give you a thrashing” (HE-M-2).

Oppressive police control is part of the commonly shared memories. One of its prominent features was the systematically enforced 9:00 p.m. curfew on weekdays which—as DA-F-2 recalls—“forced us to whisper in our homes.” Actively limiting scope for socialisation, police patrols would disperse street crowds: DA-M-1 recalls that “they would throw teargas among you” and DA-F-3 that “they would drive at you at full speed to make you run.” The climax of oppression is associated with the forced removal from Old Location to Katutura, a name which translates as “the place where we don’t want to be” in Otjiherero. Despite early Katutura’s more rigid separation between ethnic blocks, old multi-ethnic

[8] Prinsloo et al. (1982) confirm that the Damaras and Namas were the Black groups with the highest self-reported competence in Afrikaans, alongside the Tswanas, who formed only a small group in Windhoek.

social networks eventually reformed: “People looked for each other and then started mixing again” (HE-M-2). Far-reaching social change is perceived to have set in from the 1980s with the influx of Ovambo job seekers, who—following the abolition of checks on internal migration—were allowed to settle freely in Katutura. As unemployment rose, so did gangs and crime. What comes closest to a gang in the informants’ memories of Old Location is the “Upington people,” also called the Riemvasmakers, who “used to flash around their knives,” starting street fights with other residents (DA-M-1). Among the earliest gangs emerging in pre-independence Katutura were the Rooi Oë (Red Eyes), who HE-M-4 says were Ovambos. Social change had a linguistic impact. The incoming Ovambos “no longer bothered learning Otjiherero” (HE-F-2), which as a result declined as a lingua franca. The most dramatic change, however, was the increasing visibility of English. Its first forceful appearance came with the international UNTAG mission, which supervised policing in SWA from 1989 to 1990, followed by the returning Ovambo SWAPO exiles “who would only speak English” (HE-M-1). Against this backdrop, HE-M-4 describes what could be the first seeds of Kasietaal: “That thing [which young people speak today] started already then. It was jail-speak, you see. The guys would go into jail and come out speaking that thing.”

The informants characterise today’s Katutura as crime-ridden. The Hereros and Damaras see it as swamped by Ovambos “who want to take what is ours” (HE-M-1). OV-M-1 notes that Katutura’s demographic transformation has led Hereros and Ovambos to “drift apart.” While Katutura’s current population remains distributed along ethnic lines within the initial settlement, its later extensions are seen as ethnically mixed, or almost exclusively Ovambo in the case of the informal settlements, informally called “the shacks.” Today’s youth are described as vastly different in their behaviour, which is mostly summarised in terms of loitering at night and disrespecting elders. Disbelief is expressed at changing gender roles: “You find girls sitting at the bars these days,” which in the opinion of DA-F-2 would have been unimaginable before. The post-independence sociolinguistic landscape is described as dominated by English. Additionally, the Hereros and Ovambos—more than the Damaras—feel that the upcoming generation are losing their ethnic language and shifting to English, as reflected in HE-F-1’s comment that “my grandchildren only want to speak English.” They also feel that Afrikaans is no longer spoken by the younger generations, a view not shared by the Damaras, including DA-F-3, who instead thinks that “they speak it better because they go to school.” It is open to question whether these diverging views proceed from ethnocentric observations. As a matter of fact, there are suggestions that the Afrikaans of today’s youth may just not be recognised as such by the elderly informants. “Kasietaal” is not a term that any of them proved familiar with. However, one alternative descriptor emerged during the interview with the Damara men, who agreed that what it must refer to is the *zalie-goed* (“zalie stuff”). That term triggers an instant reaction from HE-M-3, who earlier had said that “Afrikaans is dying,” prompting him to lament the behaviour of today’s youth while attributing to them an Afrikaans sentence with non-standard lexical items, including the disrespectful term of address zalie:[9]

> *Ja, kyk, vandag se jongmense hulle het mos nie respek vir oumense nie. Hulle kom na jou toe hulle sê soos “my zalie, ek zoela een dollar.”*

[9] In the quoted Afrikaans sentence, zalie and zoela are attested Tsotsitaal terms meaning “mother” and “to beg/ask,” respectively. Due to space restrictions, I cannot list all individual sources consulted on South African slang and Tsotsitaal. Among the most informative sources are Stone (1991) and DSAE (n.d.).

[Yes, look, today's young people just have no respect for the elders. They come up to you and say [things] like "my old mother, I'm begging for one dollar."]

6. Today's Youth Language Practices and Kasietaal

The young informants see Katutura as socially distinct from "uptown," that is, the business district and historically White areas, and "the shacks." It is also distinct from Khomasdal, which is still associated with Coloureds and Basters. It is perceptually divided into "Katutura proper," older and more multi-ethnic, and the northern Okuryangava extension, which is more recent and more Ovambo. Apart from ethnic distinctions, there is a distinction between fresh migrants from the North, derogatorily called Gwerries, and long-term urban residents. Ethnic mixing among young Katutura residents is common, although it seems to involve mostly Damaras and Ovambos, and mostly males. Neighbourhood-based gangs are a salient feature of Katutura's street life. They characteristically involve Ovambos and Damaras (e.g. Clean-5, Bozongas, Boko Haram), although one exclusively Herero gang (Herero 2o2) is pointed out. Indigenous languages are confined to interactions with older relatives and elders from the same ethnic group, and no-one apart from three informants with a mixed ethnic background reports fluency in any other ethnic language than their own. Though it is perceived by all as the highest-ranking language in Namibian society, English is only used for interacting with outsiders or with young women in general. Speaking English only in Katutura is mostly ascribed to the Gwerries and, by implication, signals "weakness," construed as a lack of streetsmarts(O-F-3). Implicitly linking it to urbanity, the (especially male) informants name Afrikaans as their main medium of interaction with their (especially Black and male) age peers. This Afrikaans, they stress, is not the "deep" or "straight" Afrikaans that the Whites, Basters, and Coloureds or even their parents may speak. Neither is it Namlish, a widespread term that in everyone's opinion refers to a Namibian form of English with Afrikaans words. It may be called "slang," or straat-Afrikaans, although in its distinctive Katutura form—opposed to the Khomasdal Baster and Coloured Afrikaans varieties—it is rather called Kasietaal.

Kasietaal is characteristically presented as an antilanguage, which in some of its most general descriptions appears as a subverted Afrikaans variety: OV-M-3 explains that "we learn Afrikaans from the Basters and then we turn it [into Kasietaal]." This might imply that Kasietaal co-exists in individual stylistic repertoires with more established "straight Afrikaans" varieties. To a large extent, Kasietaal is also described as just an ephemeral lexicon aimed at serving boundary-marking purposes: "People keep making up new [Kasietaal] words" in the view of NA-M-1, "so that people from other kasies [Katutura neighbourhoods] won't understand." As such, it acts as a badge of insiderness and a physical safeguard against the dangers of being seen as a trespasser: "They [groups of young men on the street] would come to you and say [Kasie] words to you to test your heart" (HE-M-7), but "if you throw Kasietaal back at them they back off, thinking you may be from a gang" (OV-M-6). Opposed to "light" Kasietaal, "deep" Kasietaal is more opaque and associated with gangs. It is characteristically depicted as the linguistic component of a multimodal style that includes a specific dress code (All Stars sneakers, ripped tight jeans, caps), cosmetic attributes (dyed plaid hair, gold teeth, earrings), identifying with local or South African kwaito and Deep House music, and a specific way of moving. In its authentic expression, this style is labelled cheesa. Importantly, being cheesa implies partaking in gang activities, summarised as zama missions that mostly involve stealing from zoppa's, i.e. people seemingly unfamiliar with Katutura, or more generally showing courage in street confrontations. "Deep"

Kasietaal and its extralinguistic cues can enter individual stylistic repertoires and leave them as a function of self-distancing from gang life. OV-M-2 summarises this process using his own life story: "My language changed when I moved [from the shacks] to Khomasdal, I had to blend in [into Khomasdal's middle class, Coloured, and more "straight" Afrikaans-speaking environment]. I am formal now."

There are cues that the perceived contrast between "deep" and "light" Kasietaal is one between delinquent male indexicalities and a general urbanity that excludes the Gwerries. Unless specified as "deep," Kasietaal is not (or no longer) spatially confined to Katutura. The Coloureds claim to speak it as "it is spreading to Khomasdal," although "[Khomasdal] Basters also have their own slang" (CO-M-2). The (non-White) East side informants observe that it is used by some White boys at their school "who don't like rugby and play soccer" (DA-F-7), a sport locally associated with Blacks. NA-M-1 observes that it can also be spoken by girls, and indeed all but two female informants claim to speak it at least "a bit." It need not come with a gang dress code: As OV-F-4 stresses, it may also be spoken by people who dress "smart." Last but not least, it need not be confined to youth. In this regard, OV-M-8 remarks that his uncle—who recently moved from the North to Katutura—has asked him to "teach" it to him. Kasietaal seems to owe its social expansion not only to its general urban indexicalities but also to its utilitarian functions. In fact, HE-M-6 describes it as a quasi-pidgin in commenting that "Kasietaal is for those [rural migrants] who can speak neither Afrikaans nor English." As a result, some of its defining properties may have to do with an imperfect acquisition process: "people use words from each other's languages wrongly and it [Kasietaal] starts like that," DA-M-9 explains. This acquisition process may be leading to Kasietaal developing vernacular-like attributes by becoming a de facto default variety at the same time as being the only Afrikaans variety in some individual repertoires. This might explain why most Katutura informants feel unsure as to where the boundary lies between Kasietaal and Standard Afrikaans—to which they are most often only exposed in Afrikaans classes, outside of which they feel little social pressure to switch into "straight" Afrikaans. In this regard, KA-M-1 observes that the Basters "switch down their Afrikaans to ours" rather than the opposite, while most Katutura informants report avoiding Afrikaans and using English in their occasional interactions with White Namibians.

Of the 982 distinctive Kasietaal lexical items elicited from the young Katutura informants, 26.2% cannot be etymologically traced. The rest mostly comes from English (21.1%), Afrikaans (19%), Oshiwambo (8.9%), South African Bantu languages (8.8%), and Khoekhoegowab (8.1%). Of the items, 20.8% are attested in South Africa. The distribution of lexical items across ethnicities suggests that Kasietaal may comprise distinctive ethnic varieties. The Khoekhoegowab and Oshiwambo items are mostly named by Damara-Namas and Ovambos, respectively, while terms with Oshiwambo affixes are mostly named by the Ovambos (e.g. *oka-people*, with diminutive Class 12 prefix *oka-* [girl])[10]. However, some Oshiwambo and Khoekhoegowab items are named across ethnicities, such as particularly Oshiwambo *kwata* (literally "to take," figuratively "to snatch") and Khoekhoegowab *!gapa* (spelt mostly as *(n)xaba* "to look," figuratively "to watch"). Strikingly, terms from Otjiherero or other Namibian languages are not named. Among the most specifically named sources of Kasietaal are South African gangster movies, to which South African Bantu terms such as *mapusa* ("police") may be linked,

[10] A possible indication that Oshiwambo and Kasietaal may form a linguistic continuum in some repertoires. Khoekhoegowab affixes are absent except in one case: gata-gu (cops) (DA-F-5) with Khoekhoegowab plural suffix *-gu*.

and local hip-hop songs, with which terms such as *shimaliwa* (Oshiwambo for "money") are explicitly associated. Terms with ethnic origins tend to display modified meanings and forms: *Papura*, originally Oshiwambo for "tree bark," is named and defined as "(thin) smartphone" across ethnicities, while *//ge* (spelt mostly as *nxe/ndje*, "bad/evil"), a Khoekhoegowab-sounding term also named across all ethnicities, is derived from synonymous Khoekhoegowab *//gai*. The spread of new terms—and eventually of a common Kasietaal—may begin via (social) media. However, the informants tend to relate it more to live encounters with mobile individuals from other kasies. DA-M-4, himself an innovator with his very own term *Oom-Klisa* (one of his uncles' name, figuratively meaning "street courage"), captures this process as follows: "I was hanging out [in Havana] with those guys who were saying *bikisa* [unknown etymology, "to do"] and now me and my friends, we use it in Okuryangava."

7. Observing Kasietaal

As self-proclaimed "fluent" speakers of Kasietaal, OV-M-2, OV-M-9, and OV-M-10 volunteered to speak to each other in Kasietaal in front of a camera while I stayed away to reduce the observer's paradox. OV-M-2 and OV-M-10 have a Nganjera background and OV-M-9 a Kwanyama background[11]. All three were born and bred in Windhoek. All three live in different neighbourhoods yet form part of a mixed Ovambo and Damara social network centred around Okuryangava, where OV-M-9 still resides. Their recorded interaction lasted roughly an hour. Its transcription, performed by two Namibian students with knowledge of Afrikaans, Khoekhoegowab, and Oshiwambo, comprises 16 330 words and 1 632 turns. Roughly 93% of all lexical items are etymologically Afrikaans, while 3% are Oshiwambo (or display Oshiwambo affixes), 3% English, 0.5% Khoekhoegowab, and the rest is of various or indistinct origin. Out of all turns, 10 are Oshiwambo-matrix turns and 11 part-Oshiwambo-matrix turns. Twelve are English matrix turns and 26 part-English matrix turns. Finally, three are part-Khoekhoegowab-matrix turns. The remaining turns consist of clauses with mostly Afrikaans lexicon that could be tentatively described as "interlectal Afrikaans"- matrix clauses.

The Afrikaans component exhibits morphological features linked to the Northwestern Coloured Afrikaans (NWCA) variety (Ponelis 1993). These include the NWCA -se plural forms, such as in ouense ("guys," Std. Af. ouens) or goedese ("stuff" or collective plural, Std. Af. goete/goeters). The NWCA pronoun + enclitic possessive se structures onse ("our," Std. Af. ons), julle se ("your-PL," Std Af. julle), and hulle se ("their," Std. Af. hulle) are generalised, as are the pronominal forms [dʒei, dʒylə] with alveolar onset that are usually associated with the Southwestern Coloured Afrikaans (SWCA) variety (Ponelis 1993). Other distinctive features—attested in South Africa's Black Afrikaans varieties (see e.g. Klopper 1981)—signal partial grammatical restructuring via possible Bantu transfers. They involve, among other things, appositional subject pronouns (1) and lack Standard Afrikaans subject-verb inversion following topicalised adverbials and complementisers (2)[12].

(1) *Ek was one-man maar die toppie hy sê hy het vir my ge-mafotsha daarso. Ek, ek wys hom ek was daardie tyd by die tsari, ek dwaka, sien djy?*

[11] Ovambo is a collective name for a range of ethnolinguistic groups. Among these, the Ndongas and Kwanyamas are the demographically most prominent. Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama are Oshiwambo's two standard dialects.

[12] Out of 154 affirmative main clauses with subject NP, 61 display an appositional subject pronoun. Out of 82 utterances with topicalised adverbials except locative daar "there" and temporal toe "then," 67 display lacking subject-verb inversion.

"I was alone but the old man said he had seen me there. I told him I was home at that time sleeping, you see?" (OV-M-2)

(2) *Aaye maar daardie ene hulle kan nie nca kwata nie, hulle sal-ie kan nca weg hit-and run*
"No but that one they can't easily snatch it. They won't be able to grab it easily and run" (OV-M-7)

Apart from the highly recurrent discourse markers *aaye* "no" and *ano* "then," most of the Oshiwambo component consists of nouns of mostly Afrikaans, Oshiwambo, or untraceable etymology that display Oshiwambo prefixes (and semantically void *-a*, *-e*, *-o* suffixes). The most widespread is diminutive Class 12 *(o)ka-* (e.g. *ka-papier-a* [rolling paper], *ka-kwaai-a* [small-time thug]), followed by collective plural Class 6 *(o)ma-* (e.g. *ma-popo* [police]; *ma-vivi* [girls]), animate Class 1 *(o)m(u)-* (e.g. *om-boeta* [brother]; *mu-nene* [boss]), and semantically diverse Class 7 *(o)shi-* (e.g. *oshi-molt-e* [beer]; *shi-tukutuku* [car]). These prefixed nouns could be termed "Embedded Language Islands" (Myers-Scotton 2002) and could be seen as manifestations of a "mixed language" although the Oshiwambo concord system is never applied outside of Oshiwambo matrix clauses. Rather, nouns with Oshiwambo prefixes seem to be fit into the Afrikaans morphological frame in cases where Afrikaans plural marks are added, such as in *ka-kwaai-a-se* (small-time thugs) or *ma-vivi-se* (girls). Outside of the Khoekhoegowab matrix clauses, seemingly used for playful crossing (3, underlined), there are no instances of Khoekhoegowab affixes or particles.

(3) OV-M-7:
Nee almal man, almal kan skinner. Sago tsi khoena. Almal man.
"No everybody, man, everybody can gossip. You guys and the people. Everybody, man."
OV-M-10:
Sats tsina.
"You too."

The exchange contains 207 non-Afrikaans lexical items (a large portion of them occurring several times) inserted into Afrikaans-matrix clauses. Only 79 are named in the word lists elicited from the other informants, out of which 48 are simultaneously named by Ovambos, Damara-Namas, and Hereros. Of the items, 55 are Oshiwambo or display Oshiwambo prefixes, 52 are English, 15 are possibly Khoekhoegowab, and 23 have a South African Bantu origin, while the rest are of unidentifiable origin. The exchange reveals strategies of lexico-semantic manipulation typical of urban youth languages (section 2). Metaphors are exemplified by *Mister Green* (50-dollar banknote) and *garu* for "weed" (from Khkh. */garu* [inconsistent speech]). One example of euphemism is 'n bone gee for "to stab" (literally in Afrikaans "to give a bone"). Synecdoches are exemplified by *malt(a)* for "beer" or *nana* for "phone" or "to call" (possibly derived from Khkh. */gana* "buzzing sound"). The use of these strategies leads to "overlexicalisation" within specific lexical fields (Halliday 1978), particularly in those for "to steal/rob," "young woman," and "to kill." Aside from *(be)roof* (Std. Af. "to rob"), "to steal/rob" is referred to euphemistically via Afrikaans *(aan)raak* (Std. Af. "to touch"), vang (Std. Af. "to catch"), Oshiwambo *kwata* (Std. Oshindonga "to grab"), metaphorically via Afrikaans sny (Std. Af. "to cut") and English *knock* and *two-finger*. A "young woman" can be referred to euphemistically via Afrikaans *kleintjie* (Std. Af. "little one"). Other words for "young woman" are of unidentifiable origin with or without Oshiwambo affixes (i.e. *mu-nani*, *(ma-)vivi*, *ma-vutu*). "To kill" can be expressed literally by

Afrikaans *doodmaak* (Std. Af. "to kill"), euphemistically by transitively used *raak wys* (from Cape Town Af. slang *wys raak*, "to show respect" or Std. Af. "to become wise"), or metaphorically by *in die stof insit* (Std. Af. "to bury in the dust") or *Tate Kalunga toe stuur* (Std. Af. "to send to Tate Kalunga," with *Tate Kalunga* referring to the ancient Ovambo supreme deity).

8. Discussion

Afrikaans is historically Windhoek's most established lingua franca, although it coexisted as such with Otjiherero before independence. The sociolinguistic changes that took place post-independence led to the expansion of English as a high-function language and of Afrikaans as a low-status lingua franca in a context of decreased exposure to Standard Afrikaans norms. This sociolinguistic backdrop created scope for Afrikaans to be appropriated by non-native speakers. As a result, Katutura's post-independence Afrikaans varieties manifest sharp divergence from previous norms, which justifies the label "Kasietaal" that youth specifically apply to these new varieties. The study suggests that these divergence dynamics are accompanied by some degree of vernacularisation. While "deep" Kasietaal clearly forms a set of opaque group-marking styles, "light" Kasietaal is associated with a variety of (informal) contexts without gender connotation. The fact that women are likely to use it adds to suggestions that urban youth styles may eventually acquire broader indexicalities of "de-ethnicised" urbanity, as exemplified by the symbolic use by South African Zulu-speaking women of Tsotsitaal at the expense of the traditional Hlonipha gendered way of speaking (Rudwick 2013; see further Mesthrie and Hurst 2013). Importantly, Kasietaal can perform utilitarian functions, as it may form the first available medium of inter-ethnic socialisation for fresh rural migrants. As such, Kasietaal may be undergoing some focusing via koineisation, a process that manifests vernacularisation, by displaying a common core of Oshiwambo, Khoekhoegowab, and South African terms. Although limited, the grammatical data hint at restructuring around stabilising non-standard features as identified in vernacularising European youth varieties. The fact that the Ovambo participants all use NWCA and SWCA features alongside Khoekhoegowab (-sounding) lexicon suggests convergence with Afrikaans models relayed by the Damara-Namas, who have a history of sociolinguistic proximity to native Afrikaansspeakers, including Basters and Coloureds. It remains to be seen whether DamaraNamas are adopting—alongside Oshiwambo lexicon— the Bantu grammatical features used by Ovambos.

The informants' comments and the linguistic data show that—unlike the recently described Tsotsitaals—Kasietaal is grammatically anchored to (restructured varieties of) Afrikaans. The Afrikaans-based variety that developed in Johannesburg's Western Areas townships, i.e. the historical source of the Tsotsitaal lexicon, must have begun to decline following the forced population removals in the 1950s that separated Blacks from native Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds. Meanwhile, mixed codes involving Sotho and Nguni languages have a history of functioning as lingua francas in the Rand region (Finlayson and Slabbert 1997). These factors explain why Tsotsitaal in South Africa's context does not appear as more than a transferable lexicon detached from its original Afrikaans matrix. That Kasietaal instead retains a close association with Afrikaans has to do with sociolinguistic factors absent in urban South Africa. During colonial times, the "native" inhabitants of Namibia's southern and central towns mostly spoke either Khoekhoegowab or Otjiherero, i.e. widely distinct languages. While Otjiherero did to some extent function as a lingua franca between Hereros and Damara-Namas, Afrikaans came to be perceived as a more ethnically neutral and prestigious option, spread by the latter population group as a result of their faster integration into the urban economy (see further Peyroux 2004). Due to the

migrant status historically attached to Oshiwambospeakers, Oshiwambo carries rural indexicalities that make it appear incompatible with the urban values subsumed into Afrikaans and its Kasietaal development. Yet the notion of emergent Oshiwambo varieties adorned with a "floating" Kasietaal lexicon appears plausible based on the relatively high frequency of items with Oshiwambo affixes in the data. How durable such hypothetical Oshiwambo-based varieties are, as opposed to forming transitional stages in the acquisition of restructured urban Afrikaans varieties, ultimately depends on long-term trends in Namibian urban demographics and on whether these trends produce sociolinguistic scope for Oshiwambo to develop into a "street language."

9. Conclusion

Kasietaal comprises a continuum of youth language practices simultaneously indexed by a specific core lexicon and Afrikaans varieties. Due to the primacy of Afrikaans as a low-status lingua franca in Windhoek's low-income areas, it momentarily seems to have more potential for co-evolving with Afrikaans than with indigenous languages, although one cannot exclude the notion that Kasietaal may form a "floating lexicon" manifesting an initial stage in the acquisition of urban Afrikaans varieties. Kasietaal might be able to shed light on the emergence of Tsotsitaal while evolving in a different direction, subject to future socio-demographic trends in urban Namibia.

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