Lutz Marten

Historical linguistics and Ubuntu translanguaging: Towards a model of multilingualism, language change and linguistic convergence in the Bantu Linguistic Area

Bantu languages, a group of about 300-400 language spoken across Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa, have long been recognised as genetically related. However, the internal relation and classification of Bantu languages remains a puzzle. In part, this is because in addition to sharing long-term historical relations, Bantu languages have been in close contact for long periods, and so the languages exhibit features of both a language family and a linguistic area or spread zone. A specific aspect of this overall picture are morphosyntactic convergence effects which result in increased similarity of languages at the centre of the Bantu-speaking area ('centripetal convergence'), obscuring genetically based classification boundaries. The situation is not easy to understand within established models of language relationships employing tree or wave metaphors. In contrast I will explore the conceptual framework of Ubuntu Translanguaging (Makalela 2019) which directly addresses multilingualism and the fluidity of linguistic practices. The talk shows how this model provides a novel way of understanding complex linguistic relationships of the past and their repercussions in the present.

Literature

Makalela, Leketi. 2019. 'Uncovering the universals of *ubuntu* translanguaging in classroom discourses'. *Classroom Discourse* 10 (3–4): 237–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2019.1631198.