

**Macro sociohistorical forces, contact, convergence and the development of modern  
linguistic areas: insights from South Africa**

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Mesthrie (2017) makes a case for the development of a robust South African linguistic area (impinging on neighbouring parts of southern Africa). In pre-colonial times (up to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> C) the autochthonous Khoisan languages formed an important substratum that resulted in the eventual transformation of Southern Bantu languages, especially in their phonologies. Colonisation wrought further changes on the indigenous Bantu languages, firstly via Afrikaans (17<sup>th</sup> C on) and then English (19<sup>th</sup> C on). South Africa differs from other heavily colonised, settled and exploited territories (in the senses used by Mufwene 2001) in that indigenous languages survived and remain an essential part of an African multilingualism with official status since 1994. This has opened up new avenues of mutual influence between the living, growing substrata of mainly Bantu languages and the globally and locally prestigious English language. Mesthrie (2017) shows how Afrikaans played an intermediary role – almost as a clearing house – in disseminating features within the emerging linguistic area. The current paper for ICHL 26 will emphasise the role of two dimensions of macrolinguistic relevance: (a) processes of second language learning under socially constrained conditions (notably apartheid) that resulted in distinctly Africanised varieties of English and (b) a more egalitarian multilingualism today showing “third space” effects among younger people comfortable in English and an African language – i.e. showing innovations that go beyond each of the monolingual codes involved in language switching.

**References:**

Mesthrie, R. 2017. South Africa and Areal Linguistics. In R. Hickey (ed) *The Cambridge Handbook of Areal Linguistics*. Cambridge: CUP.

Mufwene, S. 2001. *The Ecology of Language Evolution*. Cambridge: CUP.