

Dat ek so onnosel kon wees! Insubordination in Afrikaans

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Evans (2007:367) defines *insubordination* as the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses. It is a widely attested phenomenon, not just limited to Indo-European languages. In Germanic languages, insubordinate structures are introduced by a subordinating conjunction, and if they have a specific subordinate word order, they also retain that order.

Some Afrikaans examples are:

- (1) Indien jy dalk vergeet het.
- (2) Hoe hy na jou gekyk het.
- (3) Dat ek so onnosel kon wees!
- (4) Dat dit juis nou moet gebeur.

In her Ph.D. thesis, D’Hertefeldt (2018) discussed a constructional typology for complement (3) and conditional insubordination (4) for a subset of the Germanic languages, i.e. English, German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish and Icelandic. She was however not able to include Afrikaans as at the time she did not have access to a searchable corpus.

To study the use of insubordination in Afrikaans, we want to replicate the work of D’Hertefeldt by searching for similar constructions in an Afrikaans corpus and classifying them according her typology and conclude by comparing them to the other Germanic languages. While a treebank would certainly come in handy, AfriBooms,¹ containing 45 K words of government website texts, is definitely too small and probably not the right genre of text to study this phenomenon. As the Viva corpus portal² gives access to the largest corpus (more than 200 M tokens), it was the obvious choice for this task. We limit ourselves to complement insubordination in this presentation.

Dutch has the greatest variation in constructions with complement insubordination, but these can, unlike in English or German, not be used to express the irrealis or a counterfactual wish. Afrikaans has the same variation as Dutch. A special category not mentioned by D’Hertefeldt which could probably be seen as a subcategory of affirmative constructions, are parts of dialogues in which people order their thoughts or answer their own or other people’s questions, like in “Wat sou sy sê? Hoe sy werklik voel.” These are rather frequent in both Afrikaans and Dutch. There is also an interrogative variant, e.g. “Wat sou sy sê? Hoe sy werklik voel?”

References

Sarah D’Hertefeldt (2018), *Insubordination in Germanic: A Typology of Complement and Conditional Constructions*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/Boston.

Nicholas Evans (2007). Insubordination and its uses. In: Irina Nikolaeva (ed.) *Finiteness: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations*, pp. 366-431. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

¹ <http://gretel.ccl.kuleuven.be/afribooms/>

² <https://www.viva-afrikaans.org/>