Anne Baker
German Department, University of Johannesburg

Noun classification and congruence in German and Zulu – a contrastive analysis

A B S T R A C T Teaching German as a foreign language in post-apartheid South Africa is different and more complex than before, because of the multilingual nature of the groups of learners with which the teachers are confronted, as opposed to the monolingual and monocultural groups before 1994. Taking cognizance of the full repertoire of languages represented in the classroom is not a new idea, but the current situation is such that teachers of German in South Africa have little or no knowledge of the Bantu languages, which renders them unable to do so. Contrastive analyses of German and the Nguni and Sotho languages and textbooks aimed specifically at the needs of South African learners of German as a foreign language have become a necessity. The focal point of this article is a comparison of the congruence systems in German and Zulu.

Key words: Contrastive analysis, cognitive approach to language learning, primary language, first language, foreign language, congruence

1. Introduction

Contrastive analysis for the purpose of teaching foreign languages has come a long way since the days when researchers undertook these studies for the purpose of predicting and thus avoiding errors in foreign language acquisition (Brown 1994). Many factors, apart from the L1 impact on language acquisition, have been pointed out by Kühlwein (1980: 315) and Mukattash (1980: 333), among others, who nevertheless concede that there are benefits for foreign language teaching in the contrastive analysis of L1 and the target language (TL). Kühlwein (1980: 325) sees the role of contrastive analysis coupled with error analysis as diagnostic, lending itself strongly to "a rather cognitive approach to foreign language learning".

Some reasons for embracing a cognitive approach are underlined by Traoré (2004), who focuses specifically on long-term memory. He posits that long-term memory consists of two independent but co-operating systems called the declarative and the non-declarative memory. The declarative memory learns explicitly and the learning process can be steered. The advantage of this is that

it is possible to impart knowledge to a learner, which can be used autonomously outside the classroom situation. The important role of conscious awareness ("bewusste Wahrnehmung", Traoré 2004: 30) is emphasised, which is stored in the hippocampus area in the brain. "Wichtige Eigenschaften des Hippocampusbereichs äußern sich darin, dass er Informationen schneller verarbeitet als die corticalen Areale und im Zentrum des bewussten Wissenserwerbs steht" (Traoré 2004: 33). This particular approach could be beneficial especially in the South African higher education context, because students enrol for beginners' courses in German, with little or no exposure to the language outside the classroom. Language instruction of four hours per week has to be augmented with input from the students themselves. A cognitive approach giving autonomy to the learner (Roche 2001) is well suited to the particular circumstances of foreign language learners in a country where the language is not used as a primary means of communication.

Merten (1999: 123-124) emphasises the role of existing knowledge in the processing of new information. "Menschen konstruieren neues Wissen, indem sie es mit dem schon vorhandenen Wissen in Beziehung setzen und vernetzen." He also points out that comparing the L1 with another language enables the learners to discover their own language and to enable them to find their own "Zugriff zur Sprache ... Das Kennen und Beherrschen unterschiedlicher Lern- und Arbeitstechniken ermöglicht es dem Lernenden, diejenigen Techniken auszuwählen, die seinem eigenen Lerntyp und Lernstil entsprechen" (Merten 1999: 127).

Another aspect of storing information in the long-term memory is "Bewertung" (Traoré 2004: 34). This function is carried out in the amygdala, which plays an important part in both explicit and implicit learning processes. "Die Verbindungen und Interaktionen zwischen der Amygdala und den Hippocampusstrukturen führen zu der Annahme, dass Lernen ein Zusammenspiel kognitiver und emotionaler Prozesse ist, die von früheren Erfahrungen positiv wie negativ beeinflusst werden" (Traoré 2004: 34). "Alles deutet darauf hin, dass Lerninhalte, die von der Amygdala positiv bewertet werden, als dauerhafte Erinnerungen im Gedächtnis festgehalten werden" (Traoré 2004: 35).

Nickel (1971: 8) contends that contrastive analysis of languages is justified, because the brain "seems to have difficulty in storing the data of the different languages separately."

The findings of these researchers have implications for the contrastive analysis of German and Zulu in the South African context. Apart from the cognitive benefits that Zulu-speaking learners could derive from a contrastive analysis of German and Zulu, affective factors could also come into play. Discovering that the high status target language shows some similarity with the learners' previously marginalised primary language, which could even give them an advantage over speakers of high status languages (Afrikaans and English) could provide added affective benefits. Perceived similarity (Sharwood Smith 1994) has a facilitating effect on foreign language learning. Focusing on useful similarities of the TL with the L1 contributes to the lessening of the frustration that accompanies foreign language learning and reduces the fear of the unknown and of giving an incorrect answer (Köberle 1998: 93). Boosting the confidence of the learner adds to the intrinsic motivation. Reducing the guesswork that necessarily accompanies foreign language learning (Sharwood Smith 1994) speeds up the learning process. Since positive emotions impact favourably on long-term memory (Traoré 2004: 35) and because a good self-image also has a beneficial effect on learning (Köberle 1998: 93), a contrastive analysis of German and Zulu that focuses on similarities is a worthwhile exercise.

According to Köberle (1998: 90) teachers, lecturers and textbook authors tend to ignore prior language knowledge in learners of a second or third foreign language. "Kommt es überhaupt zur nutzbringenden Anwendung des bereits vorhandenen Sprachpotenzials der Lernenden, geschieht es oft nur im Rahmen des Vergleichs der Zielfremdsprache (ZFS) und der Muttersprache (MS) der Lernenden, während der Vergleich zweier Fremdsprachen immer noch als eine Rarität gelten kann."

The South African situation for Afrikaans and English speaking learners is the same as for the students Köberle used in the "Mainzer Projekt" (Köberle 1998), but somewhat different where the learners from a Bantu language background are involved. The language comparisons that do exist in the South African context are aimed at learners from an Afrikaans or English speaking background, e.g. Von Delft (1978, 1984, 1985), Köhnke (1971), Boeddinghaus (1974) and Steyn (1990), while Bantu speaking learners have been completely ignored. The historical marginalisation of the Bantu languages in South Africa and the need to elevate the status of these languages, even in the eyes of the speakers themselves (Webb 2002; Deyers 2003), necessitate a contrastive analysis. It is not the aim of this study to go into the socio-political and historical reasons for this fact, but rather to begin addressing the vacuum.

The advantage that Bantu speaking learners have is the fact that the comparisons that do exist take cognizance of their first foreign language and the target language, both having been acquired in a school setting. Klein (1995: 426) emphasises the advantages of learners who learn a foreign language after having learned another language in a formal setting over those who have acquired a second language informally. Applied to the South African situation, this means that Bantu speaking learners, who have learned their FL1, English, in school, will benefit from it when learning another Germanic language in school.

However, not considering the learners' L1 at all is not desirable (Bernstein 1975). Research by Taoré (2004) and Merten (1999) has shown that the learner's L1 plays an important part in foreign language acquisition, because of the ease with which well- established knowledge is recalled and because new knowledge is always linked to existing knowledge.

For the purposes of this study, the Bantu languages spoken in South Africa are considered together, because the phenomenon of congruence is common to all of them even though Zulu as the most widely spoken language will be referred to specifically. Another reason for the choice of congruence as a first topic for contrastive analysis is that it is central to the German and to the Zulu language systems and is a source of error in the German of students from Germanic (Afrikaans and English) as well as Bantu language backgrounds.

An error analysis carried out on the written work of high school pupils from four different schools in Gauteng has shown that Afrikaans, English, Zulu and Sotho speaking learners all experience difficulties with congruence, particularly in the area of congruence of first, second and third person pronouns. The participants were learners of German as a foreign language from the Deutsche Internationale Schule in Johannesburg, the Deutsche Internationale Schule in Pretoria, Linden Hoërskool and Rand Park High School. While the Afrikaans and English speaking learners experience difficulties with pronouns pertaining to animals and inanimate objects, the learners from a Bantu language background seem to have great difficulty with pronouns as they are used in German. This particular phenomenon will be discussed under the heading of "Pronoun and noun agreement" later in this study.

The terminology used in this article for the prior language knowledge of Bantu speaking learners will be as follows:

First primary language (PL1) is the Bantu language the learner considers as the most familiar language of daily communication. For the complexity of this situation, see Webb (2002). Because Bantu speaking learners typically speak more than one Bantu language as a primary means of communication, the other Bantu languages in the repertoire will be referred to as primary language 2 (PL2) etc. The European languages in their repertoire will be called FL1 (first foreign language), FL2, FL3, etc. rather than L2, L3 etc. For the majority, FL1 and language of learning (LoL) are identical, i.e. English. FL2 is Afrikaans in many cases, but since the abolition of Afrikaans as a compulsory second language this scenario is changing. English and Afrikaans speaking learners tend to be less multilingual than their Bantu speaking counterparts. Thus the terminology used in the description of their language background inasmuch as it will feature in this study will be restricted to L1, L2, L3, etc. in order of acquisition. It is likely that order of acquisition also represents recency and relative competency, because these learners are young, thus obviating the need to consider competency as opposed to recency.

This contrastive analysis will be systematic (as opposed to text bound) and it will be structurally and functionally constrained (Krzeszowski 1980: 310).

2. Noun classification systems in German and Zulu

As opposed to the three classes distinguished in German, namely masculine (der words), feminine (die words) and neuter (das words), Zulu distinguishes 17 noun classes, consisting of singular and plural forms that have to be considered with respect to congruency. The criteria for classification in German are mainly morphological, although semantic criteria, such as natural gender, among others, also play a part. In Zulu semantic and morphological criteria are central in noun classification, but natural gender is irrelevant. Consider the following examples:

German

1. der Lehrer   the (male) teacher
2. die Lehrerin   the (female) teacher
3. das Mädchen   the girl
4. die Drohne   the male bee

In example 1, semantic and morphological classification principles come into play. The er ending is typical of der words and the occupation of teacher (as well as most other occupations) was originally reserved for men. The -in ending in example 2 is reserved for female living beings, while the -chen ending of example 3 and the -e morpheme of example 4 have no bearing on natural gender at all, but are purely morphological classification criteria.

Zulu

5. umuntu (class 1)   a person
6. abantu (class 2)   people
7. inja (class 9)   dog
8. izinja (class 10)   dogs

Examples 5 and 6 belong to the so-called 'human' classes, while examples 7 and 8 form part

of the 'animal' classes. Natural gender does not feature in noun classification in Zulu at all, and the particular noun category is marked by prefixes instead of a definite article as in German. Even though these examples are by no means completely representative of the noun classification systems of German and Zulu, they give an indication of the types of criteria that generally govern the practice of noun classification in each language. There are more differences than similarities in the actual classification systems of the languages under consideration. However, the effect of noun classification on other grammatical phenomena in German and Zulu shows useful similarities.

Equally important for both German and Zulu is the principle of congruence, whereby the class to which each noun belongs determines how it relates to other parts of the sentence that are syntactically related to the noun. The manifestation of this principle is different and much more extensive in Zulu than in German.

2.1 Subject-verb agreement in German

In German, subject agreement of nouns with verbs has to do with the subject being singular or plural. The suffix added to a verb stem relating to a singular noun is -t, while a noun in the plural will result in the suffix -en being added to the verb stem:

9.   Der Junge kennt die Lehrerin. (The boy knows the teacher.)

10.   Die Jungen kennen die Lehrerin. (The boys know the teacher.)

A noun in the singular can also affect the verb stem in German. The verb stems of some German verbs called irregular or strong verbs change in the present tense singular, e.g. the verb essen changes to isst (eat), fahren changes to fährt (ride), lesen changes to liest (read), stoßen changes to stößt (bump) etc. Regular or so-called weak verbs do not change the stem, but like the irregular verbs, they have the suffixes -t and -en. In German there is agreement only between the subject noun and the verb. Since German and English exhibit a very similar pattern with respect to subject and verb agreement, knowledge of English could facilitate the acquisition of this particular phenomenon. The error analysis reveals that Afrikaans speaking learners, whose L1 does not exhibit this characteristic, have greater difficulty with congruence (i.e. subject and verb agreement) than the learners from the other language backgrounds.

2.2 Subject-verb agreement in Zulu

In Zulu the changes brought about by the subject noun are related to agreement morphemes and are much more extensive than in German. Almost every noun class has a different subject morpheme. Class 5 has the subject morpheme li-, class 6 has a-, class 7 has si-, class 11 has lu-and class 14 has bu-. Classes 1, 1a and 3 all have the subject morpheme u-, classes 2 and 2a have the subject morpheme ba-, classes 4 and 9 have the subject morpheme i-, classes 8 and 10 have zi-, and classes 15, 16 and 17 have the subject morpheme ku-. The verb forms are determined by the subject morpheme of each noun in the sense that appropriate morphemes have to be prefixed to the verb root, which, as opposed to the German verb stem, does not change its form, e.g.

11.   Ubaba ufunda incwadi. (Father reads the book.)

12.   Obaba bafunda incwadi. (The fathers read the book.)

13.   Inja idla ukudla. (The dog eats the food.)

14.   Izinja zidla ukudla. (The dogs eat the food.)

In Zulu there is not only subject-verb agreement, but there can also be agreement between the object noun and the verb. The object agreement morpheme has an absolute position in the verb, namely immediately before the verb root. Consider the example below:

15.   Ngimbona manje umfana. (I see him now [the boy].)

3. Pronoun and verb agreement in German

Both the nouns in the subject position and the personal pronouns affect the verb form. As with nouns in the subject position, both the verb stem and the suffix can be affected in German, e.g.

Singular	Plural
Ich komme nach Hause. (I am coming home.)	Wir kommen nach Hause. (We are coming home.)
Du kommst nach Hause. (You are coming home.)	Ihr kommt nach Hause. (You are coming home.)
Er kommt nach Hause. (He is coming home.)	Sie kommen nach Hause. (They are coming home.)
Ich sehe die Kinder. (I see the children.)	Wir sehen die Kinder. (We see the children.)
Du siehst die Kinder. (You see the children.)	Ihr seht die Kinder. (You see the children.)
Er sieht die Kinder. (He sees the children.)	Sie sehen die Kinder. (They see the children.)

3.1 Pronoun and subject morphemes and verb agreement in Zulu

When the first or second person is used as the subject, subject agreement is brought about by the appropriate subject agreement morpheme and not by adding an ending and/or changing the verb stem, as in German. Consider the following examples:

16.   (Mina) Ngidla inyama./Ich esse das Fleisch. (I am eating the meat.)

17.   (Thina) Sidla inyama./Wir essen das Fleisch. (We are eating the meat.)

18.   (Wena) Udla inyama./Du isst das Fleisch. (You are eating the meat.)

19.   (Nina) Nidla inyama./Ihr esst das Fleisch. (You are eating the meat.)

The difference between German and Zulu is that in German one uses the personal pronouns ich, wir, du, and ihr that correspond to specific endings and in some cases to changes in the verb stem as shown in the paradigm in 3, whereas in Zulu one uses pronouns and subject morphemes, as in examples 16-19.

The error analysis did not reveal any significant difficulty with respect to this particular aspect of the agreement system. It could be that the participants' knowledge of English was sufficient to ensure correct usage.

3.2 Pronoun and noun agreement in German

In German the agreement of the personal pronoun does not only pertain to humans and animals, but also to inanimate objects. German pronouns reflect the noun class of the noun to which they are referring, irrespective of whether the noun refers to a person or not, as is evident in examples 20 and 21 below.

20.   Das ist der Tisch. Er ist sauber. (That is the table. [He] It is clean.)

21.   Ich sehe die Tür. Sie ist geschlossen. (I see the door. [She] It is closed.)

According to the error analysis, this particular aspect causes difficulty to Afrikaans and English

L1 speakers, but even more so to Bantu L1 speakers, who also have a problem distinguishing between masculine and feminine in English, and seem to have great difficulty with the German system. The following examples from the error analysis illustrate the extent and nature of the difficulties experienced by learners from different language backgrounds. Afrikaans and English speaking students consistently use es (it) when referring to animals and inanimate objects instead of the pronoun that is appropriate for the noun class to which it belongs. The learners from a Bantu language background use any pronoun that comes to mind, irrespective of whether it refers to people, animals or inanimate objects.

Compare the following set of examples taken from the writings of students with a European L1 (a) to the examples taken from students with an African L1 (b):

a)

English: die Wand – es (instead of sie); die Katze – es (instead of sie); der Ton – es (instead of er); die Personifikation – es (instead of sie); der Tod – es (instead of er).

Afrikaans: die Wohnung – es (instead of sie); Max, holt Waldi und bringt es (instead of ihn) zu mir

b)

Southern Sotho: zwei Kätzchen – ihn (instead of sie); die Wand – es (instead of sie);

Diese Kätzchen hatten weg von ihren Mutter gegangen, weil sie ihr (instead of sie) nicht wollte; Eines Tages verlört sich eines der zwei Kätzchen und Luchs sucht ihn (instead of sie) aber er kann ihn (instead of sie) nicht finden.

Sie entwirft Mode. Vielleicht macht er (instead of sie) auch das Hobby zum Beruf.

Sie wünscht ihm (instead of sich) ein kleines Haus mit Garten.

Herr Müller ist sehr besonderig. Sie (instead of er) kann …, aber sie vergessen (instead of er vergisst) seinen Autoschlüssels.

Northern Sotho: … fand sie ein Kuh und sie nennte es (instead of sie) Bella…macht ein Stall für es (instead of sie) sie muss Heu für sie und ihr Stall finden. Sie hat viel Angst für Menschen, weil sie fühlte, dass Menschen ihn (instead of ihr) droht.

Ein andere Grund warum sie so schlaflosig ist, ist dass sie nicht im freien bewegt kann und es kümmert ihn (instead of sie) sehr viel.

… weil sie glaubt, dass schmutzige Figuren lenkte ihn (instead of sie) von ihr Gedanken ab.

Ludwig Uhland benutzt das Stilmittel, weil es (instead of er) möchte uns beweisen, dass …

Sie denkt an alle Menschen, die sie gekannt hatte und weißt, das alle dieser Menschen zu ihn (instead of ihr) gehört bis zu ihrem Tod …

Zulu: Lisa hat keine Lust, um seine (instead of ihre) Haare zurecht zu machen. Wenn seine (instead of ihre) Freundinen seine (instead of sie) kritisiert holt sie Modezeitschrift aus.

Er lässt den Ball fallen, weil sie (instead of er) zu weich ist.

Er (instead of sie) ist dick angezogen. Er (instead of sie) will nicht haben, dass die Leute sie so angezogen sehen.

Sie ist froh, dass niemand ihn (instead of sie) so sieht, weil sie schrecklich aussieht.

Because this error causes communication breakdown, Zulu (and other Bantu language) speaking learners of German would have to find a new way of acquiring the pronoun system. Not distinguishing grammatically between masculine and feminine in Zulu, but having to distinguish between masculine, feminine and neuter in German can present a real difficulty to any learner whose L1 is not marked for gender with respect to pronouns. Speakers of L2 English from an African language background are notorious for using he and she interchangeably, thus hampering comprehension on the part of English L1 speakers. Acquiring markedness in the TL when the

L1 is unmarked is more difficult than moving from a more complex system to a simpler one. The fact that Zulu does have a concord system, which is determined by the noun class system, provides some degree of similarity with German.

3.3 Pronoun and noun agreement as a shared phenomenon

Considering the fact that the pronoun in Zulu derives its form from the noun class prefix of the noun to which it is referring rather than getting hung up on the gender distinction that characterises English and Afrikaans could be helpful, because the German system is similar to Zulu in this respect. Making the Zulu speaking learner aware of the fact that the personal pronoun referring to masculine nouns is er precisely because it belongs to the word class masculine (der), just as the personal pronoun referring to abafana is bona, precisely because it refers to a word belonging to the word class with a prefix aba-, could prove to be useful to the learner with a cognitive learning style. It is possible that learners have difficulty with the German system, because they are unaware of the principle governing their own PL1. Another reason might be that German grammars traditionally divide the nouns into three classes, masculine, feminine and neuter, which, apart from classifying most living beings, is a misnomer. Classifying die Tür as a feminine noun has nothing to do with natural gender. Even words denoting insects and animals such as die Biene (sexless worker bee), die Drohne (male bee), die Katze (cat) and das Schwein (pig) are not classified according to natural gender. The error analysis showed that all the participants had difficulty with the German pronoun denoting animals and inanimate objects, and Bantu PL1 students had the added difficulty with natural gender distinctions. Simply classifying nouns as belonging to the 'der class/die class/das class' and totally abandoning any reference to natural gender in the terminology would make more sense and would be less confusing for South African students, in whose L1 pronouns are distributed along the lines of natural gender (Afrikaans and English), or whose L1 distributes pronouns purely according to a genus system of nouns (Zulu).

3.4 Pronoun and noun agreement in Zulu

In the Zulu language system, personal pronouns are used in an emphatic or contrastive function or as a true pronoun, and they also show congruency with the noun. The fact that the Zulu system is more complex than the German system should facilitate the acquisition of the German phenomenon. At present, this is not the case, which should motivate teachers to find a way to make this aspect of the German grammar system more accessible to the learners. It would be interesting to see whether raising awareness of the similarities between PL1 and TL and eliminating the link between natural gender and noun classification in German would have the desired effect. Consider the following paradigm, which gives insight into the Zulu system:

Class no.	noun	pronoun	Class no.	noun	pronoun
Class 1/1a	umuntu	yena	Class 8	izitsha	zona
Class 2/2a	abantu	bona	Class 9	inja	yona
Class 3/3a	umuthi	wona	Class 10	izinja	zona
Class 4	imithi	yona	Class 11	uluthi	lona
Class 5	i(li)tshe	lona	Class 14	ubuso	bona
Class 6	amatshe	wona/ona	Class 15/16/17	ukudla, phandle,	kona/khona
Class 7	isitsha	sona		ukunxele	

4. Object agreement in German and Zulu

Pronouns in German also change their form depending on their function or "case", e.g. er becomes ihn when it is used as the direct object of the sentence, but ihm when it is an indirect object. Zulu does not have this distinction. Compare examples 22 and 24 to the Zulu equivalents 23 and 25.

22. Er ist krank, und ich besuche ihn. (He is ill, and I visit him.)
23. Uyagula. Ngiyamvakashela.
24. Er ist krank, und ich gebe ihm Blumen. (He is ill, and I give him flowers.)
25. Uyagula. Ngimupha izimbali.i

The error analysis reveals that all the participants experience difficulties with case distinction. The effect this has on their language usage is that they have to rely more on word order for case distinction than proper language usage would necessitate. At the beginners' level, this does not cause severe communication impairment as the lack of gender distinction can cause.

5. Noun and adjective agreement in German

Another aspect of the German agreement system that shows some similarity to Zulu is the use of adjectives. German has an extensive system of adjective and noun agreement where the adjective is used attributively, as opposed to predicatively. Adjectives in predicative use do not have endings indicating noun class and case. Rolland (1999) argues that the distinction between predicative and attributive adjectives is grammatically incorrect. The distinction should rather be between adjectives and adverbs. According to Rolland, true adjectives are only those words that qualify a noun and have a particular declension as a distinguishing feature, as opposed to adverbs that are used without declension. This distinction could provide a solution to the problem of distinguishing adjectives from adverbs. The following exposition will deal exclusively with what Rolland calls true adjectives:

In German the form of the adjective, i.e the suffix required, depends on the noun class of the noun being described or qualified, on the presence or absence of the definite or indefinite article, on the "case" or function of the noun in the sentence and on number. Mood and tense have no influence on the adjective. Consider the following examples.

26. Ein alter Herr gibt dem kleinen Kind einen süßen Apfel. (An old man gives the little child a sweet apple.)
27. Der alte Herr gibt einem kleinen Kind den süßen Apfel. (The old man gives the sweet apple to a little child.)
28. Die alten Herren geben den kleinen Kindern die süßen Äpfel. (The old men give the little children sweet apples.)
29. Alte Herren geben kleinen Kindern süße Äpfel. (Old men give sweet apples to little children.)

In example 26 the indefinite article is used in the subject position before a masculine word, resulting in the suffix -er being added to the adjective alt, while in example 27 the definite article in the subject position results in the suffix -e being added to the adjective alt. The other adjectives in those two examples are not affected in any way. The suffix is -en in each case. In example 28 the use of the definite article results in the suffix -en being added to the adjectives alt, klein and süß. In example 29 the omission of the article results in the suffix -e being added to the adjectives alt and süß, but in the dative plural the suffix is always -en, irrespective of the presence or absence of the article.

If the word Mann in the above examples were to be replaced by the word Weib, the suffix added to the adjective alt in example 1 would be -es instead of -er. If the object of that same sentence were to be replaced by the word Äpfelchen, which is a neuter word requiring the indefinite article ein, the sentence would change to:

> 30. Ein altes Weib gibt dem kleinen Kind ein süßes Äpfelchen. (An old hag gives the little child a sweet little apple.)

A sentence in which the definite article das is used would necessitate the form of the adjective as seen in the following example:

> 31. Das alte Weib gibt einem kleinen Kind das süße Äpfelchen. (The old hag gives the sweet little apple to a little child.)

Replacing the subject and direct object of the above examples with feminine words would result in the suffix -e being used in all cases. Compare the following examples with 26 and 27:

> 32. Eine alte Frau gibt einem kleinen Kind die süße Banane. (An old woman gives the sweet banana to a little child.)
>
> 33. Die alte Frau gibt dem kleinen Kind eine süße Banane. (The old woman gives the little child a sweet banana.)

If the indefinite article in all the singular forms were to be replaced by a possessive pronoun, the suffix added to the adjectives would remain the same. Compare the following examples with 26, 30 and 32:

> 34. Mein alter Herr gibt deinem kleinen Kind seinen süßen Apfel. (My old man gives your little child his sweet apple.)
>
> 35. Sein altes Weib gibt meinem kleinen Kind sein süßes Äpfelchen. (His old hag gives my little child its sweet little apple.)
>
> 36. Meine alte Frau gibt ihrem kleinen Kind ihre süße Banane. (My old wife gives her little child her sweet banana.)

In the plural the use of the possessive pronoun corresponds to the use of the definite article, resulting in the suffix -en being used in all cases. Consider the following example:

> 37. Eure alten Herren geben unseren kleinen Kindern ihre süßen Äpfel. (Your old men give our little children their sweet apples.)

In some cases, the noun can be omitted from the German sentence:

> 38. Welchen Apfel möchtest du: den roten oder den grünen? (Which apple would you like? The red one or the green one?)

When masculine and neuter nouns are used in the genitive with the 'nil' article, the adjective endings -en and -(e)s are added to the noun.

> 39. Trotz schlechten Wetters hat er die Fahrt unternommen. (He undertook the journey in spite of bad weather.)

In all other cases, the adjective ending used after a 'nil' article corresponds to the ending the article would have had.

> 40. Schlechtes Wetter ist unangenehm. (Bad weather is unpleasant.)
>
> 41. Bei schlechtem Wetter geht man nicht aus dem Haus. (When the weather is bad, one does not leave the house.)

5.1 Noun and adjective agreement in Zulu

One of the problems facing the Zulu grammarian seems to be the question of what exactly constitutes a word. For the purposes of this study, the position of Posthumus will be adopted.

According to Posthumus (2000: 11), the 'so-called adjective in Zulu' should generally be regarded as a word group consisting of a verbal and a nominal part. The following examples are given to illustrate that 'the adjective occurs as a so-called adjective-noun only in the positive of the present tense of the indicative mood with no aspect with third person as subject' (Posthumus 2000: 11). In all other cases the adjective should be regarded as a word group. Consider the examples quoted below.

42. Leli hhashi lihle. (<li + *li- +) li +hle) {so-called adjectival noun only}
    'This horse is beautiful.'

43. Leli hhashi alilihle. (<a + li – li + hle) {negative copulative particle and so-called adjectival noun}
    'This horse is not beautiful.'

44. Leli hhashi liba lihle. (< li +ba – li + hle) {copulative verb and so-called adjectival noun}
    'This horse becomes beautiful.'

45. Wena umuhle. (<u + *li–mu + hle) {copulative particle and so-called adjectival noun}
    'You are beautiful.'

46. Leli hhashi liselihle. (<li + se {<sa + *li} – li + hle) {copulative particle and so-called adjectival noun}
    'This horse is still beautiful.'

Posthumus also holds that the terms 'predicative' and 'attributive' are inappropriately applied to the African languages, since the two terms are often distinguished in terms of the difference in word order between them. However, this distinction does not hold for Zulu. Consider the examples quoted from Posthumus (2000: 14):

47a   Izinkabi zinkulu. (The oxen are big.)

47b   Zinkulu izinkabi. (They are big, the oxen.)

48a   Izinkabi ezinkulu zifike kuthangi. (The oxen which are big, arrived the day before yesterday.)

48b   Ezinkulu izinkabi zifike kuthangi. (The big oxen arrived the day before yesterday.)

Compare the German equivalent of these examples:

49a   Die Rinder sind groß. (The oxen are big.)

49b   Sie sind groß, die Rinder. (They are big, the oxen.)

50a   Die Rinder, die groß sind, kamen vorgestern an. (The oxen that are big arrived the day before yesterday).

50b   Die großen Rinder kamen vorgestern an. (The big oxen arrived the day before yesterday.)

Example 49a is an example of what Rolland (1999: 108) calls the "Adjektivadverb" with the verb directly preceding it and the qualifier being without declension. Example 50a contains a relative clause describing the oxen, while example 50b contains an attributive adjective directly preceding the noun and exhibiting the morphological structure that is appropriate for a plural noun preceded by a definite article in the nominative case.

Posthumus (1998: 16) argues that "a subcategorization and discussion of the so-called adjective should indicate:

1) that it basically includes two words: a (copulative) particle or copulative verb and a so-called adjective-noun;

2) that the nominal part includes a qualificative noun with a changing/variable prefix (while in the case of the so-called relative, the nominal part includes a qualificative noun with a constant/fossilized prefix);

3) whether the so-called adjective is inchoative or non-inchoative;

4) in which mood it is;

5) in which tense it is;

6) in which actuality it is (positive/negative); and

7) whether an aspectual morpheme is included."

For the purpose of this particular study, the most important considerations are 1 and 2, since those are the only ones that have any bearing on the German forms the learner will be trying to master.

6. Relative and agreement

The need to qualify is not only satisfied by using adjectives, but also by employing relatives, descriptive possessives and possessive word groups. The semantic function of all of these grammatical phenomena is qualifying the noun to which it refers. This is true of both German and Zulu, so that one can claim translation equivalence if nothing else. Systematic equivalence is found in the fact that in both languages, the form of the relative and possessive word groups depends on the noun class of the noun being qualified.

6.1 Relative clauses in German

In German relative clauses word class plays an important part and the form of the relative pronoun depends on whether the noun to be qualified is used in the singular or plural, and to which class it belongs. The four "cases" that are distinguished in German are also vital in determining the exact form of the relative pronoun to be used. Congruence in German relates to noun class and case, and in Zulu to noun class and categories such as the copulative construction, the verb, possessives, absolute pronouns, demonstratives and quantifiers.

The German system differs substantially from Zulu and a comparison would probably only be of use to the teacher, assisting with diagnosis if problems arise. The fact that the principle of using a relative for the purpose of qualifying a noun is common to both languages constitutes translation equivalence only. The distribution of the relative in Zulu has some aspects in common with German, such as the relative clause. The Zulu equivalent of the following sentence would be a direct translation, using the semantic equivalent of the German construction:

37. Der Junge, der arbeitet, schläft zu Hause. (The boy, who is working, sleeps at home).

38. Umfana osebenzayo ulala ekhaya.

In the following example, there are some changes that have to take place in the German sentence, but have no influence on the Zulu equivalent, except for classes 1 and 1a:

39. Der Junge, den wir sehen, schläft zu Hause. (The boy, whom we see, sleeps at home).

40. Umfana esimbonayo ulala ekhaya.

The reason for the change in the German sentence is the fact that the antecedent in 37 is the subject of the sentence, whereas it is the object in 39. The relative pronoun changes from der to den (37 and 39). In the Zulu translation of the German relative clause in example 37, one can observe the relative marker consistent with class 1, namely o- (example 38). The translation of example 37, however, shows the relative subject morpheme esi- as the antecedent marker and -m- as the object marker as can be seen in example 40.

6.2 Relative clauses in Zulu

In Zulu the relative a- is prefixed to the subject morpheme resulting in vowel coalescence, thus forming the relative concord that is appropriate for each noun class, e.g.

Class no.	relative a-	subject morpheme	relative concord
1	a-	u-	o-
2	a-	ba-	aba-
3	a-	u-	o-
4	a-	i-	e-
5	a-	li-	eli-
6	a-	a-	a-
7	a-	si-	esi-
8	a-	zi-	ezi-
9	a-	i-	e-
10	a-	zi-	ezi-
11	a-	lu-	olu-
14	a-	bu-	obu-
16	a-	ku-	oku-
person			
1st sg.	a-	ngi-	engi-
1st pl.	a-	si-	esi-
2nd sg.	a-	u-	o-
2nd pl.	a-	ni-	eni-

The main systematic difference between the two languages is the fact that the relative clause in Zulu is formed by employing a relative particle with a non-verbal complement or an agreement morpheme with the relative verb stem, while the German equivalent uses a relative pronoun. Using a relative clause for the German equivalent of igazi elibomvu (blood which is red) would be very unconventional, if not totally unacceptable to a German native speaker. Blut, das rot ist is simply less economical than rotes Blut (red blood).

7. Possessives and agreement

In German possessives are pronominal, consisting of a stem indicating the possessor and a suffix indicating the noun class and case of the possessee:

Stem	
1st person singular	mein- (my)
2nd person singular	dein- (your)
3rd person singular	sein-/ ihr- (his/her)
1st person plural	unser- (our)
2nd person plural	euer- (your pl.)
3rd person plural	ihr- (their)
Polite form	Ihr- (your)
Full possessive form	
Masculine Nominative	Das ist mein Vater. (That is my father.)
Masculine Accusative	Ich sehe deinen Vater. (I see your father.)
Masculine Genitive	Das Kind seines Vaters ist sein Bruder. (His father's child is his brother.)

Masculine Dative	Das Kind bei unserem Vater ist klein.
	(The child that is with our father is small.)
Feminine Nominative	Das ist meine Mutter. (That is my mother.)
Feminine Accusative	Du siehst deine Mutter. (You see your mother.)
Feminine Genitive	Das Auto ihrer Mutter ist kaputt. (Her mother's car is broken.)
Feminine Dative	Ich spreche mit Ihrer Mutter. (I am talking to your mother.)
Neuter Nominative	Mein Pferd ist alt. (My horse is old.)
Neuter Accusative	Er reitet sein Pferd. (He is riding his horse.)
Neuter Genitive	Der Schwanz seines Pferdes ist schwarz. (His horse's tail is black.)
Neuter Dative	Du stehst neben deinem Pferd. (You are standing next to your horse.)
Plural Nominative & Accusative	Unsere Kinder lieben ihre Eltern. (Our children love their parents.)
Plural Genitive	Die Freunde unserer Kinder sind nett. (Our children's friends are nice.)
Plural Dative	Kommen Sie mit Ihren Büchern? (Are you coming with your books?)

The semantic and systematic equivalents of these possessives in Zulu are the pronominal possessives. The possessive particle agrees with the possession, and the possessive pronoun indicates the possessor. In forming the possessive, the possessive particle is prefixed to the pronoun. In each case the pronoun or noun represents the possessor, and the possessive particle represents the possessee:

46. Ihhashi lakhe ... (his/her horse ...)

47. Ukudla kwabo ... (Their food ...)

48. Izinja zawo ... (amadoda) (Their (the men's) dogs ...)

These are examples of the so-called true possessive. Zulu also distinguishes the descriptive possessive, the semantic equivalent of which is a compound noun in German and is therefore not relevant here, because it has nothing to do with congruence in German.

49. Indlu yotshani (a grass hut)

50. Eine Grashütte

8. Conclusion

The preceding contrastive analysis clearly shows an unexpected degree of similarity between the congruence systems in German and Zulu. Even if the usefulness to the individual learner could be disputed, the teacher of German as a foreign language in South Africa should have at least theoretical knowledge of one or more Bantu languages in order to augment language teaching in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural classroom (Dyers 2003: 103). The teacher could play an active role in creating an awareness of, and an interest in, the Bantu languages, encouraging learners to investigate their PL1 for similarities and differences. A lack of awareness of the grammatical structures of their PL1 could be a stumbling block initially, especially since the Bantu languages are not taught as subjects in many schools. If the Department of Education is serious about changing the language situation in South African schools, the status quo need not remain. Teacher training programmes could be adapted to include a compulsory Bantu language component (also see Dyers 2003: 70), which would have benefits far beyond the German classroom.

There is a dire need for textbooks written specifically for South African learners of German as a foreign language. Contrastive analyses of German and the relevant languages must accompany such a venture, even if it is only "one of several currents in a deep ocean" (Nickel 1971: 16).

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne Baker is a German lecturer at UJ. This article is based on research for a doctoral study conducted under the promotership of prof. Lionel Posthumus (UJ) and prof. Sonja Bosch (UNISA).

Anne Baker
German Department
University of Johannesburg, UJ
PO Box 524
Auckland Park 2006
jmab@rau.ac.za

i   The m- mu- variation of the object morpheme in the Zulu examples is merely determined by the