

## The Dutch and Afrikaans "busy progressive" is busy to emerge in South African English

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It is often stated that the use of *busy* in combination with the [*be V-ing*] progressive of Standard English is a typical South African English feature (see Mesthrie 2002, Bekker 2012):

- (1) We are **busy preparing** a most powerful B2B and B2O catalogue. (GloWbESA)
- (2) I was **busy washing** the dishes and my kids kept calling me. (GloWbESA)

A number of statements are then also made regarding this adjective in the SAfE [*be busy V-ing*] construction, for example that it is borrowed from Afrikaans (Bekker 2012: 145); that it is redundant (DOSAEHP; 1991); and that it is semi-auxiliated (Mesthrie 1999: 67).

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it is to revisit and critically evaluate some of the statements made so far about the "SAfE *busy* progressive". For example, I want to try to show that *busy* is not really redundant, it is not semi-auxiliated and also that it does not really mark progressiveness in the true sense of the word.

The second objective of this paper is the central focus of my investigation – It to show that a "new" and "true" *busy* progressive is emerging in SAfE, namely [*be busy COMP V<sub>INF</sub>*]:

- (3) We're *busy putting up shelves and busy to design* our tanks and enclosures. (GloWbESA)
- (4) Our education system *is busy to fall APART*. (GloWbESA)

Mesthrie (2002:349) attributed examples like these from his data to "L2 writing of Afrikaans speakers".

I will show from recent SAfE corpora that the use of this construction is becoming more frequent in SAfE and that in all probability not only used by Afrikaans L2 speakers.

From the perspective of diasystematic construction grammar, I will explain that the development of this new progressive construction i) is clearly attributed to the influence of Afrikaans on SAfE and ii) developed into SAfE via Afrikaans from 17th century Dutch. The construction can therefore now occur in all three languages, but language-specific differences (such as the placement of the direct object) are visible.

- (5) SAfE: ... he **is busy to build** a team ... (GloWbESA)
- (6) Afr: ... hy **is besig om** 'n span **te bou** ...
- (7) Dutch: ... hij **is bezig om** een team **te bouwen** ...

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