

CONTACT-INDUCED CHANGES IN MORPHOSYNTAX: AN INTRODUCTION

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The study of language contact and contact-induced change has seen a rise in scholarly attention since Weinreich's *Languages in Contact* (1953), and especially after Thomason & Kaufman's (1988) *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. Since then, numerous textbooks and handbooks (Heine & Kuteva 2005; Matras 2007, 2020; Hickey 2010, 2017), edited volumes (Aikhenvald & Dixon 2001, 2007; Braunmüller et al. 2014; Bianconi et al. 2022), monographs (Chamoreau & Léglise 2012; Coghill 2016; Fendel 2022; Meyer 2023; Bianconi forthcoming) and dissertations, both on modern (Bisiada 2014) and on ancient (Capano 2020) languages have appeared. These dealt with a wide variety of aspects of language contact from different vantage points, frameworks and approaches – for instance, Thomason's (2001) socio-structural approach vs. Myers-Scotton's (2002) purely structural, model-based one.

Among the types of contact-induced change, those affecting the morphosyntax of one of the languages in contact represent a hitherto comparatively understudied field – especially from a typological perspective. But these phenomena are of particular interest because they illustrate that even typologically uncommon changes to very basic patterns of a language can result from contact (e.g. changes in morphosyntactic alignment, cf. Coghill 2016; Meyer 2019, 2023). Also, they suggest that speakers of a contact language index constructions with individual languages less strictly than we may assume intuitively (cf. e.g. Höder 2014).

In many such studies, the languages under examination are either well-attested historically, or there are still native speakers, with or without a contact background, who may be consulted. This availability of data allows for thorough diachronic studies (e.g. for English and Norman French) and for assessing the status of a potentially contact-induced change (e.g. grammaticalisation patterns in Spanish–American communities as reported by Fishman et al. 1971 respectively).

Yet, the situation is considerably less clear in scenarios where contact took place prior to attestation (e.g. Parthian and Armenian) or where documentation has been minimal until relatively recent times (Amazonian languages and the languages of Papua New Guinea); where languages have no written tradition, but have influenced a written language (English and Romani; Lekoudesch and German); where languages are attested in different historical depth (Sanskrit and Dravidian); where contact-induced changes appear to be restricted in genre (Armenian and Greek; Egyptian and Greek); where dialects or varieties of the same language are involved (Ancient Greek dialects); where translation phenomena may be involved (biblical Greek and Latin). To complicate the matter further, it remains generally difficult to distinguish securely changes due to or at least heavily influenced by language contact from those resulting from genetic inheritance (cf. Pat-El 2013), in particular where there is no 'standard' language.

The papers collected in this special issue of the *Transactions of the Philological Society* aim to explore the problems of investigating contact-induced change in morphosyntax in general,

but with a particular focus on such historical or corpus languages. They endeavour to collect and present new data and perspectives and to assess possible contact-induced changes in the morphosyntax of a number of ancient and modern languages as well as to compare and contrast the methodologies of investigating this type of change in different linguistic contexts.

Accordingly, this issue addresses the following central questions (among many more which are specific to individual papers):

- How can the analysis of historical (corpus) languages benefit from the theories and methods used in the description of contact in better-attested languages or dialects?
- How can typology inform a finer-grained analysis of contact at the morphological and syntactic level?
- What role, if any, do ‘markedness’/‘typological distance’ and genetic relatedness play in borrowing processes of morphosyntactic structures?
- Do insights from recent scholarship allow us to revisit and improve on the explanation and analysis of established cases of (possible) language contact?
- To what extent can new (typological) insights confirm or refute doubts concerning traditional ‘hierarchies of borrowability’ (e.g. Curnow 2001)?
- Is it possible to establish a ‘typology of borrowing’, broadly defined, for contact-induced changes in morphosyntax?

Just as the wide variety of the papers in this issue reflect the present and historical breadth of the *Transactions of the Philological Society*, so the sequence of the papers reflects the history of linguistics itself. Half of the researchers contributing to the present issue are offering articles on comparatively well-studied ancient and less ancient Indo-European languages such as Greek, Latin, the Romance and Germanic languages. The articles on these languages, which have long constituted the cornerstone of ‘comparative philology’, have been arranged in a loosely chronological order in the first half of the volume, preceded only by a broader consideration of the typology of language contact. Following on, just like in the history of linguistics itself, where more attention has been given to less studied languages in the more recent past, the second half of the volume is devoted to possible contact-induced phenomena in ‘rarer’ languages such as Yupik, Udi and Mayan. The volume ends with a pair of papers which aim at providing a broader perspective and different conceptual frameworks in which to consider, explore, and explain contact-induced changes in morphosyntax.

Opening the volume, Robin Meyer's paper investigates and critically discusses the requirements, challenges, and constraints of constructing a typology of contact-induced change. Advocating a database-centred approach as pioneered by WALS and continued by Grambank, he outlines what other dimensions and factors contact typology needs to take into account, and at the example of morphosyntactic alignment change illustrates the inherent limitations it faces. Three case studies on Classical Armenian, Light Warlpiri and Northeastern Neo-Aramaic, together with data from nine other languages, underline that greater discoverability, more detailed descriptions and more transparent or unified terminology are a basic requirement for this nascent field to flourish.

The first of the paper dealing with particular contact scenarios, Marta Capano and Michele Bianconi's article presents a case study on Ancient Greek dialects, in which they analyse a specific morphological trait – the dative plural suffix in *-essi* – and its analogical expansion. The presence of this ending in different dialects of the same language has traditionally been explained as the result of contact. The authors review all the available evidence both in the epigraphic and in the literary corpora, and weigh the different hypotheses for and against contact, concluding that this ending could have arisen in multiple ways, and therefore should not be used as a decisive isogloss for diachronic branching of the Ancient Greek dialectal varieties.

Going a few centuries forward, Victoria Fendel's paper studies direct-object structures in support-verb constructions within the corpus of Greek documentary papyri from fourth- to mid-seventh-century Egypt. By this time, Greek had coexisted with Coptic for about a millennium, and Fendel's analysis reveals that the direct-object structures present in this data sample can be explained in a number of ways, that include – but are not restricted to – language contact. Noting that direct-object structures are already a marginal pattern inherited from classical Greek, she argues that some of these patterns can be attributed to inheritance or to extension into new contexts. At the same time, certain authors did extend such patterns – either through individual choices or due to societal pressures – more broadly, revealing an influence from the Coptic language.

Zooming in on a similarly specific type of genre, Biblical translations, Chiara Gianollo and Marina Benedetti examine the origin of the Greek and Latin reflexive possessive adjectives *idios* and *proprius* from a language contact perspective. In analysing this hitherto understudied topic, they argue that the development of Latin *proprius* 'personal; peculiar' into a reflexive possessive adjective is influenced by a similar use of *idios* 'private; personal' in the Greek New Testament. They observe that within the New Testament, this specific adjective takes on innovative roles as a reflexive possessive term and contend that this transformation originates from within the system and is brought about by the disappearance of reflexive possessive forms found in Classical Greek. At a more general level, they assert that the practice of translation serves as a catalyst for linguistic change which, at the same time, is also connected to system-internal pressures.

In his paper, which looks at languages in Europe in the Middle Ages, Giacomo Bucci addresses the question of prehistoric linguistic contact between Germanic and the surrounding languages and suggests that Germanic may have played a role – alongside Baltic – in the spread of partitive-related phenomena in the languages of the Circum-Baltic region, particularly the Finnic languages. In studying two underexplored phenomena – the so-called 'genitive of quantification' and 'genitive of negation' – the author argues for their presence in a number of early Germanic languages, underscoring their significance in future research related to linguistic contact in the prehistoric Circum-Baltic region.

Fast-forwarding of a few centuries once more, Xavier Bach's article argues that both contact phenomena and independent developments played a part in the diachrony of negation markers in Occitan and French. The influence of French is suggested to have played a role in the adoption of *pas* as a post-verbal negative marker in Occitan, whereas the disappearance of *ne* is posited as an independent development in both languages. A further comparison between the two languages shows that Occitan went a step further than French in Jespersen's cycle by allowing *pas* to appear in negative concord constructions with negative indefinites. This distinction sets Occitan apart from French, where only *ne* can be used in such contexts.

Leaving the Indo-European languages behind, Gilles Authier's contribution explores the origins of differential object marking in Udi, an East-Caucasian language of the Lezgian branch. Mobilising both synchronic data from contact languages like Azeri, Tat and Modern Eastern Armenian, as well as diachronic evidence from their ancestors, Caucasian Albanian and Classical Armenian, the paper suggests that no single contact language stands out as an obvious model for this particular argument marking pattern. He proposes that DOM in the region be treated as an areal phenomenon, while suggesting that Classical Persian is the least improbable model for this pattern in Udi and its ancestor.

Moving from the Caucasus to Siberia, Anna Berge's paper offers a new perspective on the well-established contact relationship between Sirenik and Central Siberian Yupik, both members of the Yupik branch of the Eskimo family. While contact effects in the phonology, prosody, and lexicon of Sirenik have been explored already in the past, this study expands our understanding of this contact situation by outlining Central Siberian Yupik influence on

Sirenik inflectional morphology. The author suggests that certain Sirenik forms, historically misinterpreted as archaisms, are in fact borrowings, resulting from widespread multilingualism in the speaker community. The misidentification of these borrowings, in turn, results from undue emphasis of Sirenik conservatism. Berge's findings underline the need to systematically review the role of language contact in the reconstruction of Proto-Eskaleut.

Crossing the Pacific for the Americas, James Tandy's article concerns affix borrowing in a number of Eastern Mayan languages of central Guatemala, all of which have an innovative perfect participle in *-maχ*. Using data from Poqom, where this marker originated, and the languages along the Sacapulas Corridor to which it spread (Uspanteko, Sakapultek, Sipakapense, Northern Mam), Tandy explores functional changes and the different transmission modalities between model and recipient language. His results highlight both the diversity of contact-induced changes, even in similar circumstances, as well as the significance of structural similarities and multilingual communities in the borrowing process.

Transcending questions about individual contact scenarios and their implications, Kaius Sinnemäki and Noora Ahola approach the question of how contact-induced change in less well-attested language families can be explored. At the example of the interactions between Alorese, an Austronesian language, and Adang from the Papuan family, and using computational phylogenetic methods to reconstruct ancestral languages, they compare and contrast Bayesian reconstruction with a more recent proposal using only one closely related language as a benchmark. Their evaluation of 140 binarised morphosyntactic features relating to adnominal possession indicates clearly that benchmark modelling is simpler, less computationally and methodologically onerous, and produces results that do not differ significantly from the Bayesian method, thus allowing for economies in time and effort when considering the impact of language contact.

A similarly innovative approach is presented in the article by Henri Kauhanen, George Walkden, Gemma McCarley, Molly Rolf, and Sarah Einhaus, which advocates the use of historical corpora to better understand contact-induced change. Focusing in particular on the questions of WHERE and WHEN contact took place, they present three case studies illustrating the diachronic and geographic diffusion of morphosyntactic simplification: number concord in English, null subjects in Latin American Spanish, and the case system of Balkan Slavic. Their detailed quantitative research not only paints a clearer picture of the specifics of the diachrony and geography of change, but further is able to answer questions concerning the HOW, that is the particular sociolinguistic factors influencing these changes.

The selection of case studies presented in this volume does not claim comprehensiveness. However, it is a clear sign that it is worth investing in the study of language contact and that the dialogue between different sub-branches of linguistics is increasingly fruitful. They all yield results on which we can build new analyses, refine our methodologies, and expand our knowledge of human cultures and nature.

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