Typologising contact-induced changes in grammatical constructions

Malcolm Ross

Australian National University
and
Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

There is now an extensive literature on contact-induced change in grammatical (i.e. morphosyntactic) constructions. Since Harris & Campbell's (1995) and Prince's (1998) seminal work on the topic, a number of attempts have been made to typologise contact-induced morphosyntactic changes (Johanson 2002, Aikhenvald 2003, Sakel & Matras 2008). All of these are useful in different ways. This talk proposes yet another typology, based on the degree to which and manner in which a construction is altered as a result of contact.

Contact-induced changes are often classified according to whether they are a result of bilingual copying or as a result of rapid language shift entailing incomplete second-language learning. Although the two categories of contact can often be distinguished on the basis of their linguistic outcomes, I suggest that their morphosyntactic outcomes are generally indistinguishable and offer a reason for this. In the belief that progress in contact linguistics can only be made by examining cases where we have a good understanding of (i) the changes that have occurred, (ii) the sociolinguistic circumstances of contact, and (iii) the language from which a construction has been 'copied', illustrations of contact-induced morphosyntactic change will be offered from Colloquial Upper Sorbian (Scholze 2008) and Irish English (Harris 1991, Hickey 2010).

References

Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y., 2007a. Grammars in contact: A cross-linguistic perspective. In Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald & R.M.W. Dixon, eds, *Grammars in contact: A cross-linguistic typology*, 1–66. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harris, Alice C. & Lyle Campbell, 1995. *Historical syntax in cross-linguistic perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harris, John, 1991. Conservatism versus substratal transfer in Irish English. In Peter Trudgill & J.K. Chambers, eds, *Dialects of English: Studies in grammatical variation*. London: Longman.

Hickey, Raymond, 2010. Contact and language shift. In Raymond Hickey, ed., *The handbook of language contact*, 151–169. Oxford: Wiley--Blackwell.

Johanson, Lars, 2002. *Structural factors in Turkic language contact*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.

Prince, Ellen F., 1998. The borrowing of meaning as a cause of internal syntactic change. In Monika S. Schmid, Jennifer R. Austin & Dieter Stein, eds, *Historical linguistics 1997: Selected papers from the 13th International Conference on Historical Linguistics, Düsseldorf, 10-17 August 1997*, 339-362. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Sakel, Jeanette & Yaron Matras, 2008. Modelling contact-induced change in grammar. In Thomas Stolz, Dik Bakker & Rosa Salas Palomo, eds, *Aspects of language contact: New theoretical, methodological and empirical findings with special focus on Romancisation processes*, 63–87. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Scholze, Lenka, 2008. *Das grammatische System der obersorbischen Umgangssprache im Sprachkontakt*. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag.