

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN HISTORICAL CHANGE

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Abstract. Language contacts often result in significant historical changes, and such changes are very common in four corners of the world, and in recent years, contact-induced historical changes have been given their deserved attention (e.g. Heine 2005; Heine and Kuteva 2003, 2005, 2006) in historical linguistics. However, there are some cases where languages have preserved their archaic grammatical structures in spite of much contact with different languages. It is argued here that such exceptional cases often involve speakers' social identity, which tends to resist new structures influenced by other languages. Identity-related issues in historical linguistics have not been much studied, but it is hoped that this paper sheds some lights on them.

Introduction

Historical change of languages has different developmental paths and there have been a number of previous works that have identified various cases over the past several decades. In this paper, one specific case of historical change, i.e. contact-induced historical change, is discussed in relation to speakers' social identity. Contact-induced changes have not been noticed much in terms of historical development until recently (e.g. Heine 2005; Heine and Kuteva 2003, 2005, 2006), but it is commonly found in the world. However, strong social identity among speakers seems to resist such contact-induced changes.

This paper starts with various cases of contact-induced changes in the world first, and illustrates one specific case from Europe around the eighteenth century. Examples shown in these sections clearly show that language contacts are important in historical changes. Having established these cases, some exceptional cases found in the Baltic region, sub-Saharan Africa and Amazonia are presented. These cases are analysed in terms of speakers' social identity.

Contact-induced changes

Studies on language contact have gained much attention, and more 'traditional' approaches concerning contacts are either borrowing of some lexicons (cf. borrowability hierarchy, e.g. Campbell, 1993; van Coetsem, 2000; Johanson, 2005; Matras, 2005; Verschik, 2007) or creole studies (e.g. Bickerton 1975; Holm 1988-9, 2000; Lefebvre 1998; Mühlhäasler 1986; Siegel 1987, to name some). Some of these works are somehow historical in nature, often dealing with genesis of pidgins and creoles. Contacts are often considered responsible for the historical changes, too. For instance, the formation of Present-day English is largely a result of Old English being in contact with Old Norse: earlier changes were more obvious in the northern part of English where Old Norse settlers co-existed with speakers of Old and Middle English. These two languages were more or less mutually understandable and speakers did not learn each other's languages. Instead, they modify their own language for a better comprehension by, for instance, dropping the case ending. This dialect became highly influential due to various social changes and transformed the more conservative southern dialects after the Middle English periods (see Townsend 2006 and Corrie 2006 for a comprehensive review). A similar case can be found in Scandinavia: Dahl (2004) shows that the language change from Old Swedish to Modern Swedish started in the Southern part of Sweden, where much contact was made with German through trading in the Hanseatic League. As in the case between Old Norse and Old/Middle English, Swedish also lost the case marking in the Southern part, but some Northern dialects still preserve the residues of earlier case marking to this day. See also the next section for details concerning contacts increased by trading in Europe.

These are normally considered within contact linguistics, but a new line of approach has been recently promoted by Prof. Bernd Heine and his colleagues (Heine 2005; Heine and Kuteva 2003, 2005, 2006). Their main argument is that contacts can cause more than a simple borrowing or a forceful adaptation: an invention of new structures can be made by analysis of a contact language, and in creating a new structure, basic principles of grammaticalisation can be applied. Heine and Kuteva (2003: 533; 2005: 80-84) argue that there are four basic stages in the process of contact-induced grammatical changes, termed as replication, as summarised in (1).

- (1) a. Speakers of language R notice that in language M there is a grammatical category Mx.

- b. They develop an equivalent category Rx, using material available in their own language (R).
- c. To this end, they draw on universal strategies of grammaticalisation, using construction Ry in order to develop Rx.
- d. They grammaticalise construction Ry to Rx.

Let us take an example of contact in East Anatolia. This region is located in the Eastern tip of Turkey, sharing borders with Georgia, Armenia and Iran. This is a region with a great mixture of languages (Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Kartvelian and Turkic), along with cultures and religions (Georgian/Russian Orthodox, Armenian Church, Roman Catholic and Sunni Muslim, cf. Toyota forthcoming a). Haig (2001) reports a case of a contact-induced change among Turkish (Turkic), Laz (Kartvelian) and Zazaki (Iranian), where a form meaning ‘after’ appears to have been grammaticalised to something like a consecutive clause marker added to the first clause, as schematically represented in Figure 1. Among these languages, the Turkish structure seems to be a model influencing Laz and Zazaki, as demonstrated in (2) to (4), taken from Haig (2001: 203-4). Notice here that this is not a simple lexical borrowing: otherwise, a phonetically-modified form of a Turkish word *sonar* should be found in Laz and Zazaki, but both of them use their own word semantically corresponding to ‘after’, e.g. *şuk’ule* and *tepeyā*, respectively (i.e. process represent in (1b)). This case demonstrates that the grammaticalisation of ‘after’ turning from a preposition/participle to consecutive conjunction in Laz and Zazaki, i.e. a lexical word turning into a more grammatical marker.

[X happened then Y happened] to [[X happened]-after [Y happened]]

Figure 1. A grammaticalisation path of a consecutive marker

- Turkish (Turkic)
- (2) *giyin-dik-ten sonar gitti*
 get.dressed-NOM-ABL after go.PST.3SG
 ‘After he had got dressed he left.’
- Laz (Kartvelian)
- (3) *ham çitaabi golobioni=şuk’ule omçiru-şa*
 DEM book read.1SG.PFV=after swim.INF-LOC
bidi
 go.1SG.PFV

‘After I had read this book I went swimming.’

Zazaki (Iranian)

- (4) *ti merdī tepeyā, ez se kerā?*
2SG die.PST.2SG after 1SG what do.MOD.1SG
‘After you have died, what should I do?’

There are common patterns of replication, which include (Heine and Kuteva 2003): new future tenses are more likely created than the past tense; relative pronouns are invented once a language is in contact with IE languages; languages without articles or evidentials, once in contact with languages with such devices, tend to replicate them somehow.

Changes around the eighteenth century in European

Examples we have seen so far are rather simple case of language contacts, but social changes, needless to say, can have significant impacts on contacts. One obvious case is found in Europe around the eighteenth century: generally speaking, the grammar of some Indo-European languages saw dramatic changes around the sixteenth to eighteenth century (Toyota forthcoming b), i.e. after the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment. There are various factors affecting the outburst of grammatical changes, but what is significant is that social movements or changes allow more contacts. In addition, these factors are coming from different sources.

Among various changes during this period, religion was significantly affected. The whole Europe had been Christianised by the Renaissance (the last country to be Christianised was Lithuania in the fourteenth century), and Catholicism and Orthodoxy were the main branches of Christianity. However, Churches in the medieval Europe were full of corruptions and some started questioning their authority. On top of this, Churches failed to deal with the epidemic of the plague, i.e. they could not save people. All these events made people leave the Church and lose faith in Christianity. All these events led to the reformation of church and establishment of Protestantism (cf. Martin Luther in 1517). Due to such changes, people were allowed to question authorities and Individual thinking was encouraged. This increased intellectuality at the social level, and people started seeking for worldly knowledge. This resulted in the advancement of science, as often represented by statements by Galileo or Copernicus. Scientists prior to them already knew that the earth was not flat, for instance, but due to the power of Churches, they could not state it publicly. In addition, due to the invention of mass printing, books became

more readily available to wider audience, and the Bible was translated into vernacular languages. All these events increased people's literacy and thus, aided intellectuality. This is the period when people became increasingly familiar with different foreign cultures.

This period also saw the trading among different countries becoming increasingly common throughout Europe. For instance, the Hanseatic League was formed around the Baltic Sea, which allowed more movability and contacts with people with different linguistic background. Communications among the countries participating in the Hanseatic League influenced each other. As already mentioned in the previous section, the Swedish grammar was much affected through contact with German and the contact could not have been so intense without the increase in free trading and freedom of travelling.

In spite of these general movements in Europe, some countries have resisted these social movements typically associated with the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment. For instance, Catherine the Great of Russia (reigning from 1762-1796) banned anything that can support the Renaissance and Enlightenment movement in fear of uprising or revolution. Russia had power over Slavic countries in the Eastern Europe, especially in South Slavic countries (Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, etc.), and therefore, Renaissance did not spread much in the Balkan region either. Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, however, had closer contact with the Hapsburg monarch and although they are Slavic countries, they underwent influence from the Renaissance.

The shaded area in Figure 1 represents an area where the influence from the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment can be detected. It covers the major part of the Western Europe, but not much of the Eastern Europe. The languages spoken in the shaded area have gone through the changes, showing remarkable differences from their ancestral languages from more than 1,000 years ago. On the other hand, other languages, e.g. Celtic, Baltic and Slavic, have not changed much for the past 1,000 years or more. These languages are all spoken outside of the shaded area in Figure 1. This suggests that an increased contacts instigated by the social movements played an important role in the Europe.



Figure 1. Areas affected by the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment

Archaism in linguistic change

Our argument so far suggests that close contacts always results in language changes. In spite of close contacts, however, some languages resist changes and preserve archaic structures. We can identify at least three such language groups, which are Baltic languages, Nilo-Saharan languages (Sub-Saharan Africa), and Arawakan languages (Amazonia). We will look at each case separately.

Baltic languages

Both Lithuanian and Latvian have preserved much archaic languages from Indo-European perspectives, although Latvian is more susceptible to change mainly with German influence. The Baltic regions had close contacts with different countries, such as Poland, Russia, Germany, Sweden, etc. mainly due to the Hanseatic League. Lithuania in particular formed a Common Wealth with Poland (1569-1795). The common languages in this Common Wealth were either Polish (for diplomatic purposes) or Latin (for official documentation), and Lithuanian was not used at all for any official purposes. The Polish-Lithuania Common Wealth was dismantled by neighbouring countries, in particular by the Russian Empire, since Catherin the Great thought it could be a serious threat to Russia. Lithuania enjoyed a brief period of independence for about twenty years (1918-1940), but it had been constantly occupied by

powerful neighbours, mainly the Soviet Union, but also Nazis Germany around the period of the two World Wars.

Lithuanian has been the vernacular language in Lithuania under occupation, but speakers never gave up the language in several-century-long bilingualism. Lithuania has been very slow in adopting a new system. For instance, this was the last country to be Christianised in Europe, and Catholicism was finally adopted around the fourteenth century, but it was much closer to a merger between old Paganism and new Catholicism. One could argue that the conservatism was perhaps people's characteristics in Lithuania, but it can be argued that Lithuanians have stronger identity as a country and this aided them to preserve the language in spite of all contacts, perhaps as a sign of resistance.

Nilo-Saharan languages

Nilo-Saharan languages are spoken mainly in the upper parts of Chari and Nile rivers. The range of area where these languages are spoken stretches Northward to Algeria and Mali, Southward to Benin, Nigeria and Congo republic and Eastward to Sudan and Tanzania. Most speakers are city-dwellers, but some are nomads. This language family has gained attentions from linguists due to its internal linguistic diversity, since different Nilo-Saharan languages can demonstrate completely different types of grammatical structures even in a relatively close proximity (p.c. John I. Saeed). This much-discussed diversity might be due to the classification. The first attempt was made by Greenberg (1963), but there are several other attempts ever since (e.g. Bender 1996-7; 2000; Ehret 2001). As Bender (2000: 43) claims, “[o]f the ‘Greenbergian phyla’ (Greenberg (1963)), Nilo-Saharan is probably the least widely accepted.” Thus, it is important to bear in mind that one cannot dismiss a possibility that there are several different language families clumped into one in Nilo-Saharan languages and thus, much diversity within this language family exists.

On a historical account, however, it is possible to argue differently, i.e. the diversity can be attributed to the partial reconstruction after experiencing the Bantu (especially Swahili) expansion in the geographic areas where Nilo-Saharan languages were spoken. The Bantu expansion is believed to have started around 3,000BC in the West Africa, and the eastern part was affected around 1,500BC. The Bantu people could cultivate a land and agriculture was spread as these people expanded their territory. During this period, a number of Nilo-Saharan speakers experienced a close contact with speakers of Bantu languages, mainly Swahili, to the extent that many became at least bilingual, some even monolingual with Swahili. At one point in their history, Nilo-Saharan

languages were at the brink of extinction by being overtaken by Swahili, but some speakers somehow reconstructed their ancestor's language in the middle of the incorporation of the Bantu language and culture (p.c. Bernd Heine). Similar process is also found in South America where Spanish is overtaking native languages. For instance, Quechua speakers in Peru and Bolivia nowadays do not learn Quechua first, but Spanish. Their native language is taught through Spanish as a second language. This can affect a fluency of younger people in Quechua. In the process of reconstructing Nilo-Saharan languages, some speakers were successful in achieving a previous state of a language, while others failed to do so. The co-existence of good and bad reconstruction can be considered to have resulted in diversity in current linguistic structure in Nilo-Saharan languages.

Why did speakers want to return to their original languages? It may be related to a surge of interests in their culture, or increased awareness of social identity. Some recently extinct languages, such as a Celtic language Cornish or a language isolate Ainu, have attracted a group of enthusiasts who try to preserve these dead languages. So there was a resurgence of interests in their language as a part of cultural heritage, which forced the linguistic revival. These revived languages may not be necessarily identical to what was spoken when native speakers were still alive. Thus, the diversity of linguistic structure can be attributed to varying degrees of success in reconstructions.

Arawakan languages

Arawakan languages are spoken in the wide range of South America, from Caribbean islands in the north to some northern parts of Paraguay and Argentina in the south. This language family is the largest in Amazonian languages, along with Tupi languages and Carib languages. The only difference is that Tupi and Carib languages are geographically rather confined to a certain region, e.g. central/southern Brazil and northern Brazil/French Guiana/Surinam/Guyana/Venezuela, respectively. In spite of the wide range of distribution, Arawakan languages are reasonably homogeneous, e.g. Arawakan speakers from the Caribbean islands can possibly understand another group of Arawakan speakers, say, from Paraguay. This type of mutual understanding cannot happen in other language families in Amazonia if two groups are geographically separated far apart. Arawakan people have traveled all over the Amazonia perhaps for trading for at least a couple of centuries. Various pieces of evidence such as pottery can be found along different rivers and it is generally considered that they were brought to these places during the trading. This suggests that the Arawakan people have had much contact with different

tribes other than the Arawakans themselves. In spite of close contacts with non-Arawakan speakers, Arawakan people could keep the language mutually understandable for over several centuries, suggesting that speakers have resisted contact-induced changes very much. This has puzzled scholars for several decades.

One recent hypothesis by Hornborg (2005) claims that Arawakan traditions and identity are considered a key to preserve the language, i.e. “I believe that generalization may indeed be possible at the abstract level of issues such as the relationship between material culture, language and ethnicity” (Hornberg 2005: 590). For instance, Arawakan people never fight against each other once two tribes meet and become aware that their languages are mutually understandable (p.c. Alf Hornborg). This type of ‘social code’ does not exist in other language group. Thus, social unity or identity among the Arawakan speakers can be a key to understand the linguistic situation in Amazonia.

Social identity in language contacts

The three cases described above are all similar in one sense, i.e. languages involved all have had intense contacts with speakers of different languages and yet, they have managed to preserve their own language structures. What appears to be common among them is that all these speakers have some sort of social identity, which hinders contact-induced changes. Thus, it is possible to argue that there are two kinds of reasons for creating archaism in linguistic structure, i.e. either a lack of contact (cf. Figure 1) or a strong identity among speakers. What we are mainly focused on concerning the previous three cases is the latter case.

This should be, however, taken with caution. With an intense contact situation, it is possible to have slight changes, although overall structure is not really affected. We have argued that Arawakan languages resist changes, but some hints of changes can be found. (5) to (7) represent a case of contact between Portuguese and an Arawakan language, Tariana. As stated in the second section, the relative pronoun is often replicated in contact with Indo-European languages and this is one such case. Tariana has its own similar structure to Portuguese on its own, as shown in (5), but younger speakers started to use a question word as a relative marker in Tariana as in (6), based on a Portuguese counterpart (7).

Tariana (North Arawak, Aikhenvald 2002: 183)

- (5) *Ka-yeka-kanihĩ* *kayu-na*
REL-know-DEM.ANIM thus-REM.P.VIS

‘Those who knew used to talk like this.’

Younger Tariana speakers (North Arawak, Aikhenvald 2002: 183)

- (6) *Kwana ka-yeka-kanihĩ kayu-na na-sape*
who REL-know-DEM.ANIM thus-REM.P.VIS 3PL-speak
‘Those who knew used to talk like this.’

Portuguese (Aikhenvald 2002: 183)

- (7) *Quem sabia falava assim*
who knew spoke like.this
‘Those who knew spoke like this.’

These examples may appear to be a counterargument, but generally speaking, identity-related issues often delay historical changes. In other words, cultures without such strong identity are more likely to adopt a new construction. For this purpose, a mere translation from foreign languages could influence some frequently used structures. For instance, Kinsui (1997) reports a case of Japanese developing a passive with an overtly-expressed agent through translation of scientific documents (mainly medicine) from Dutch around the 18th century. There was no verbal communication, and the only contact was through scientific documents. Japan has been closed to foreign countries. This was mainly because the government wanted to stay away from the Christian influence in order to run the country as they wished and avoid uprising against the government. This action was not due to the social identity. On the contrary, Japan was eager to absorb foreign cultures and influences once they are openly imported. So once the contact was made, a number of changes soon became obvious. Thus, social identity can possibly affect how people accept the influence from contacts with speakers of different languages.

Conclusion

In this paper, contact-induced grammatical changes are studied. They are indeed widespread in the world, but there are a handful of cases where intense contacts did not affect the language structure. It is argued that socio-cultural identity can be a clue in understanding archaism in grammatical structure in spite of intense contacts. Social identity has not been considered in relation to the language contacts, and the argument put forward in this paper suggests that they may be closely connected. This paper is an initial attempt to shed light on this issue, and therefore, this is an area in historical linguistics that requires further research to gain full

picture of relationship between social identity and contact-induced changes.

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