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Language Contact

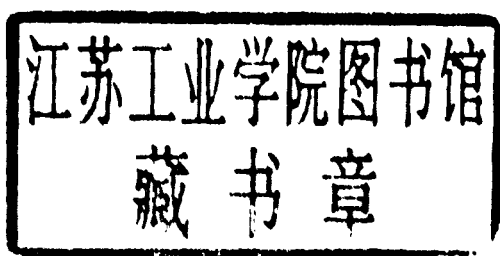
Yaron Matras

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Language Contact

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Preface

In those very few societies in which monolingualism is the norm, bilinguals are sometimes asked which language they dream in. The answer is, of course, invariably: 'It depends what or whom we are dreaming about.' That tends to put monolinguals in their place: they show respect for the rhetoric. In fact, the correct answer is that as bilinguals we are unable to keep our languages entirely apart even in our dreams. We may associate certain expressions or phrases with particular events, gestures, or faces, but in our dreams as in our everyday conscious communication we strive for the absolute liberty to use our entire linguistic repertoire freely, with no constraints, and we adore those moments when we can converse with fellow bilinguals who understand and even encourage us to do so. Language contact is about the way we live with the expectation that even our dreams should be monolingual, about how we bypass these restrictions and mix our languages in actual conversation, and about the way in which even monolinguals sometimes end up enriching and re-shaping their own form of speech thanks to their interaction with bilingual individuals. This is essentially the idea that is presented, in somewhat more detail, in the following chapters.

I feel fortunate to have been raised in a multilingual environment and in a multilingual family, and I owe many of the insights that I am able to present here as my own to the stimulating and compelling circumstances that allowed me to participate, observe, and reflect on the way individuals and societies practice language contact. I am also privileged to have had the opportunity, over the years, to discuss issues of language contact at the professional level with many colleagues and friends, among them Greg Anderson, Peter Auer, Ad Backus, Peter Bakker, Giuliano Bernini, Walter Bisang, Simone Bol, David Bradley, Kate Burridge, Michael Clyne, Bernard Comrie, Bill Croft, Eva Csató, Guy Deutscher, Christina Eira, Viktor Elšík, Patty Epps, Marcel Erdal, Nick Evans, Dan Everett, Jonathan Fine, Victor Friedman, Friedel Frohwein, David Gil, Eitan Grossman, Dieter Halwachs, Ian Hancock, Martin Haspelmath, Bernd Heine, Peter Hendriks, Kees Hengeveld, Kristine Hildebrandt, Lars Johanson, František Kratochvíl, Masha Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Tanya Kuteva, Patrick McConvell, April McMahon, Felicity Meakins, Miriam Meyerhoff, Marianne Mithun, Pieter Muysken, Carol Myers-Scotton, Johana Nichols, Shana Poplack, Mark Post, Carmel O'Shannesy, Angelika Redder, Gertrud Reershemius, Jochen Rehbein, Jeanette Sakel, Eva Schultze-Berndt, Zdeněk Stary, Thomas Stolz, Uri Tadmor, Johan van der Auwera, Peter Wagner, and Debra Ziegeler; my thanks to all of them.

My students and collaborators in the Manchester Working Group on Language Contact have been a precious source of inspiration. For many hours of thought-provoking discussion I wish to thank Asma Al-Baluchi, Adele Chadwick, Claire Chen, Veliyana Chileva, Andrea Donakey, Francesco Goglia, Lucy Hottmann, Heveen Ali Kurdi, Sandy Lo, Mohamed Fathi Osman, Barbara Schrammel, Veronica Schulman, Maryam Shabibi, Ellen Smith, Declan Sweeney, Anton Tenser, Anne-Marie Thomson, and Şirin Tufan.

Some of the data included in this book and some of the ideas discussed here are, directly or indirectly, products of a series of externally funded projects carried out at the University of Manchester. I am grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding some of my research on Mixed Languages and on Language Convergence and Linguistic Areas, to the Economic and Social Research Council, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the Open Society Institute for funding my research on Romani, to the British Academy for support for my research on Domari as well as the creation of a digital archive of recordings of endangered languages, and to the Special Research Area on Cultural and Linguistic Contacts in North Africa and Western Asia at the University of Mainz (SFB 295) for sponsoring my fieldwork on a number of languages. For technical support and assistance with the collection, processing, and archiving of data and data sources I thank Viktor Elšik, Barbara Schrammel, Jeanette Sakel, Christa Schubert, Charlotte Jones, Ruth Hill, Hazel Gardner, Chris White, Veronica Schulman, and Anthony Grant, who worked with me on these projects, as well as Martin Nissen, Dörte Hansen-Jaax, Dunja Rösteholm, Nellie Weiss, Mi'assar Sleem, Moshe Dafan, Greta Johansen, and many others who have provided interviews, shared data, or helped gloss and translate examples. I am deeply grateful to my colleagues in Linguistics and English Language at the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures of the University of Manchester for their support and enthusiasm, which allowed Manchester to become a thriving centre for discussions on language contact.

During the preparation of the book I benefited from audiences' comments in reaction to invited keynote addresses at the Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain in Roehampton and at the Workshop on Language Variation and Contact-Induced Language Change at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Linguistic Typology in Paris, as well as from reactions to seminar presentations at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, at the universities of Cologne, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, York, Jerusalem, Prague, Melbourne, and Sydney, and at the Australian National University in Canberra and the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology at La Trobe University, Melbourne. I began writing the book during a research visit at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, in the spring of 2004, and I am grateful to Bernard Comrie and Martin Haspelmath for facilitating my stay there. I completed the manuscript in 2007 during my stay as International Linkage Fellow sponsored by the Australian Research Council and as Distinguished Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Research Centre for Linguistic

Typology at La Trobe University, Melbourne, by invitation of Sasha Aikhenvald and Bob Dixon.

The ideas expressed in this book are grounded not just in the experience of language contact, but also in a general appreciation of what language is. I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to my teacher Jochen Rehbein, who, more than anyone, prompted me to reflect critically on the meaning of categorisations, labels, and models in linguistics, to search for the inner function of linguistic forms in the very purpose of linguistic activities, and to appreciate, unapologetically, the broad range of human communicative activities as an integrated whole and as the key to the study of the language faculty. I feel that his past years of guidance and inspiration have shaped my approach to the following chapters even more than they had influenced some of my earlier work, and I therefore dedicate this book to him.

Last but certainly not least, my love and very special thanks to Tom, for being the most wonderful 'Ben' that he is, and for always helping me see the world in full colour.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The study of language contact

Manifestations of language contact are found in a great variety of domains, including language acquisition, language processing and production, conversation and discourse, social functions of language and language policy, typology and language change, and more. This makes it a special challenge to compile an overview of the subject. Most introductory works devoted to contact linguistics have hitherto chosen to specialise either in the individual-synchronic aspects of bilingualism, or in structural-diachronic aspects of contact-induced language change. This book introduces an integrated theory of language contact, within which the study of these various domains can be bound together.

Since the launch of modern contact linguistics through the works of Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1953), the study of individual bilingualism and of societal multilingualism has occupied a centre-stage position in the field. A testimony to this position is provided by a series of introductory textbooks that focus on one or both these areas, covering topics such as the acquisition of two languages from birth, bilingual language processing, diglossia and societal bilingualism, and language policy in multilingual communities (see Grosjean 1982, Hamers and Blanc 1989, Romaine 1989, Hoffmann 1991). Appel and Muysken's (1987) textbook was one of the first introductory works to take into account diachronic aspects of contact-induced language change. It was soon followed by Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) monograph, which remains one of the most influential and frequently cited works on language contact in the context of historical linguistics. Both these books put a spotlight on grammatical borrowing, and on the emergence of areal language clusters and of new 'contact' languages. Two further domains of investigation within contact linguistics have received attention in specialised introductory textbooks: the study of pidgins and creoles (Holm 1988–89, Arends, Muysken, and Smith 1995), and the study of code switching (Muysken 2000a, Milroy and Muysken 1995).

In recent years, several valuable contributions have appeared that aim to provide a state-of-the-art description of the field of contact linguistics or parts of it. Thomason's (2001) introduction to language contact emphasises historical linguistic aspects, including linguistic areas, language maintenance and shift, and contact languages. Winford (2003) is one of the first to combine a discussion

of codeswitching with an overview of historical aspects of contact, and Clyne (2003) combines a synthesis of other works on codeswitching and individual and societal bilingualism with a detailed discussion of the Melbourne corpus of immigrant languages. Myers-Scotton (2002b) outlines the Matrix Language Frame model of codeswitching and applies it to further phenomena such as language attrition, lexical borrowing, and the emergence of contact languages. The book is one of few attempts at a comprehensive discussion of contact phenomena within a specific theoretical framework. Further aspects of bilingualism, such as second-language acquisition and child bilingualism, societal multilingualism and language policy, and language processing and intercultural communication are covered in Myers-Scotton (2005).

1.2 Toward an integrated, functional approach to language contact

It is difficult to follow in the footsteps of the authors of these many insightful and inspiring works. My reason for wanting to add yet another book to the list of these fine introductions derives from a wish to strengthen the focus on a number of aspects in the discussion of language contact:

First, with the exception of Winford (2003) and Myers-Scotton (2002b), most textbooks continue to specialise in either synchronic (individual and societal) or diachronic aspects of language contact. Winford's book is an exception, as it devotes a chapter to a comprehensive and thorough discussion of codeswitching as well as accommodating a discussion of second-language acquisition. Missing from Winford's discussion are aspects of bilingual first-language acquisition and language processing, as well as an integrated theoretical approach that links the various domains. Myers-Scotton's (2002b) book is by contrast devoted entirely to introducing the Matrix Language Frame model, and does not pretend to cover the state-of-the-art in the individual fields to which the model is applied. The present book attempts to do both: To present the state-of-the-art in a wide range of sub-fields in contact linguistics, both synchronic and diachronic, and at the same time to offer a number of theoretical principles through which contact can be interpreted and appreciated in an integrated manner.

Second, it is my impression that much work has tended to focus on the implications of language contact to the inner coherence of language 'systems', while the perspective of the bilingual individual, which had stood so much in the foreground of Weinreich's (1953) work, seems to have been demoted. To be sure, this perspective is given much coverage in both conversation-analytical and 'rational choice' models of codeswitching (e.g. Auer 1984, Maschler 1994, Li Wei 2002, Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai 2001), in the recent direction in the study of child bilingualism (cf. Lanza 1997), and in some models of bilingual language processing (Grosjean 1998, Paradis 2004, Green 1998). But speakers' communicative

goals and intentions, their discourse strategies, and their language processing capacities are at the core of any speech production and so also of the structural innovations that constitute the seeds of potential language change. They therefore merit consideration when we set out to interpret processes of contact-induced change. 'Contact' is, of course, a metaphor: language 'systems' do not genuinely touch or even influence one another. The relevant locus of contact is the language processing apparatus of the individual multilingual speaker and the employment of this apparatus in communicative interaction. It is therefore the multilingual speaker's interaction and the factors and motivations that shape it that deserve our attention in the study of language contact.

Third, while interest in language contact has been on the rise among language typologists, and while a series of generalisations on the structural outcomes of contact have been proposed, tested, and discussed in the past, a typologically oriented framework of contact is still missing. The discussion in this book is informed by recent sampling of cases of contact-induced change. Taking into account processes observed in other domains of contact such as second-language acquisition and bilingual language processing, I propose some generalisations about the degree to which different structural components of language and different grammatical categories are 'vulnerable' in contact situations. The underlying assumption is that the language faculty is stratified and that the hierarchical behaviour of categories will reflect this stratification. In this respect, the study of language contact is of value toward an understanding of the inner functions and the inner structure of 'grammar' and the language faculty itself.

Fourth, no integrated approach to language contact has yet been formulated from a functionalist perspective. Such a perspective rests on a view of language as social activity and of communication as goal-driven. Consequently, it views speakers as actors who use language in order to achieve goals, and it attributes the selection of entire codes and of individual structures of language – constructions, word-forms, intonation, and so on – to goal-oriented activity. Moreover, it regards the structures, categories, and forms of language as triggers of linguistic-mental processing tasks that engage the hearer in communication. The dimension of the 'hearer' is therefore crucial to our analysis of linguistic 'categories' and their function; and the function of 'categories' is in turn regarded as central to their fate in various processes, from acquisition to codemixing in conversation, and on to structural borrowing and deliberate manipulation of language.

The theory of contact that is explicated in the following chapters is not a 'Theory' in the sense of a formal, self-contained, finite set of rules and principles that label, and pretend to be able to predict, each and every outcome of language contact. Rather, it is a theoretical approach that seeks to make generalisations about various manifestations of language contact, informed by, and embedded within, a broader understanding of language and communication. Such an understanding draws on a variety of sources, ideas, and works in linguistics. It includes a view of communication as part of a repertoire of social activities (Labov 1972a and 1972b, Hymes 1974, Gumperz 1980, Schifffrin 1987, Saville-Troike 1989),

of communicative interaction as a repetitive form of human behaviour (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974, Sperber and Wilson 1986, Ehlich and Rehbein 1986),¹ and of grammar as the packaging of information in discourse (Givón 1984, 1990). It is based on the assumption that speakers' linguistic repertoires consist not just of formal rules and a lexicon, but of constructions (Goldberg 1995, Croft 2001), that language change is the product of innovation by individuals (Labov 1994, Croft 2000), and that speakers are creative and able to exploit meanings in new contexts, leading to the formation of new categories through 'grammaticalisation' (Heine, Claudi, and Hünemeyer 1991, Hopper and Traugott 1993). It is also guided by an appreciation of 'pragmatics' as a method to uncover the very purpose and the inner function of structural categories, and not just to describe their casual employment.

My principal assumption in this book is that bilingual (or multilingual) speakers have a complex repertoire of linguistic structures at their disposal. This repertoire is not organised in the form of 'languages' or 'language systems'; the latter is a meta-linguistic construct and a label which speakers learn to apply to their patterns of linguistic behaviour as part of a process of linguistic socialisation. Rather, elements of the repertoire (word-forms, phonological rules, constructions, and so on) gradually become associated, through a process of linguistic socialisation, with a range of social activities, including factors such as sets of interlocutors, topics, and institutional settings. Mature multilingual speakers face a constant challenge to maintain control over their complex repertoire of forms and structures and to select those forms that are context-appropriate. Context-appropriate selection does not necessarily conform to a separation of 'languages': In some contexts, certain types of cross-linguistic 'mixing' and 'inserting' may be socially acceptable and may constitute effective goal-oriented communication.

Speakers' awareness of, and ability to implement social norms on the selection of elements within the linguistic repertoire is a central aspect of communication in multilingual settings. Awareness and the ability to control the repertoire may receive support from institutions and overtly articulated social norms and values concerning language. On the other hand, the language faculty presents itself as uneven with respect to the ease of control and selection of structures, as some language processing operations may escape the speaker's control more easily than others.

Communication in a language contact setting is the product of the interplay of two primary factors (Figure 1.1): Loyalty to a set of norms that regulate the context-bound selection of elements from the repertoire, and a wish to be able to exploit the repertoire in its entirety irrespective of situational constraints. The balance between these two factors is determined by a need to remove hurdles that stand in the way of efficient communication.

When loyalty prevails in a strict manner, then 'interference' or compromises are likely to be minimal. But when the wish to exploit the full repertoire is given some leeway, then strict context-bound separation of repertoire components might be compromised. Individual words that are usually reserved for interaction

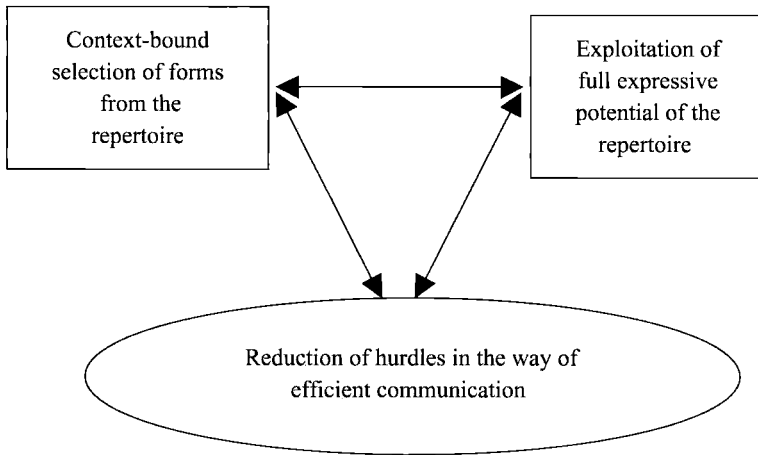


Figure 1.1 *The interplay of factors in communication in language contact settings.*

in Context set A might, for example, be employed ('inserted') also in interaction in Context set B. Second-language learners might draw on the phonology of their native language while communicating in a second language, bilingual children might employ constructions from one language that are not usually used in the chosen language of conversation, and adult bilinguals might insert discourse markers from one language when communicating in another. All this suggests that multilingual speakers do not 'block' or 'switch off' one of their languages when communicating in another, but that they have the full, complex linguistic repertoire at their disposal at all times.

The interplay of factors displayed in Figure 1.1 may lead to language change when a particular pattern of linguistic behaviour becomes widespread and accepted within a relevant sector of the speech community. Thus, an inserted word-form from another language may become a loanword, collective language-learning may show substrate influences in phonology (as well as in other domains of structure), the morpho-syntactic constructions of languages in bilingual communities may undergo convergence, and discourse markers from one language may be borrowed into another language. Contact-induced language change is thus ultimately the product of innovations that individual multilingual speakers introduce into discourse in a multilingual setting. Such innovations are, in turn, strategies that allow speakers to navigate between the two push-and-pull factors that we have identified: complying with social norms and expectations on context-appropriate selection of structures, on the one hand, and exploiting the full potential of the linguistic repertoire, on the other. From the point of view of their functionality, synchronic and diachronic manifestations of contact are therefore inseparable. Consequently, contact is not regarded here as an 'external' factor that triggers change, but as one that is internal to the processing and use of language itself in the multilingual speaker's repertoire of linguistic structures.

A final note is in order on the position of grammatical categories in the investigation of structural manifestations of contact. I follow a functionalist perspective that regards ‘words’ as more than just ‘words’: linguistic expressions and constructions – whether bound or unbound morphemes, or morpho-syntactic organisation patterns – trigger distinct types of mental processing operations. These operations may be organised and retrieved in different ways, allowing counterpart structures in the multilingual repertoire to be more or less easily distinguished from one another, selected and controlled. The inner function of grammatical categories therefore has a key role in explaining the behaviour of that category in language contact situations. In typological perspective, sampling reveals that there are some noteworthy differences between categories in respect of their likelihood to undergo change as a result of contact. Hierarchical differences among categories also appear in language acquisition and in language mixing in conversation. In line with explanatory accounts in linguistic typology, I take the view that re-occurring patterns of structural change and structural categorisation are not accidental, but that they are based in part on shared human conceptualisations of reality, and more specifically on the foundations of managing and engaging in human communicative interaction. I will be paying special attention to the role of categories and their functions, assigning similar outcomes of contact not just to similar social settings and similar processes of identity negotiation, but also to the role of categories in triggering and regulating distinct language processing operations. In this respect, I will be assuming that contact has not just a social dimension, but a communicative dimension, and that the structure of grammar and the changes that it undergoes are a reflection of this communicative dimension.

1.3 The structure of this book

Following from the interests and principles just described, this book is intended to deliver an integrated discussion of individual and social aspects of bilingualism as well as of processes of language change. As noted above, one of the aims of the book is to restore the centre-stage position of the bilingual speaker as a creative communicator in the perspective that we take when investigating language contact. I therefore open with a chapter that introduces the ‘Preliminaries’ of the emergence of a multilingual repertoire (Chapter 2). This chapter is a case study of the early acquisition of language in a trilingual child. Its main purpose is to illustrate how bilinguals develop a command of the repertoire along with the skills to manage the interplay of factors depicted in Figure 1.1: compliance with interlocutor expectations on the context-bound selection of elements from the repertoire, on the one hand, and exploitation of the full repertoire, on the other. Already at the early stages of language acquisition, the child speaker develops a sensitivity toward expectations on context-appropriateness of word-forms. At the