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Languages of the Caucasus and contact-induced language change

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This issue of the journal *Language Typology and Universals* deals with contact-induced changes in some of the languages of the Caucasus.

The linguistically diverse area of the Caucasus (Comrie 2008) houses three autochthonous language families: Northwest Caucasian (or Abkhaz-Adyghean) (Hewitt 1989; Hewitt 2005), Northeast Caucasian (or Nakh-Daghestanian) (Smeets 1994; Job 2004; van den Berg 2005), and South Caucasian (or Kartvelian) (Harris 1991; Boeder 2005). Throughout the history, languages of the three families have been in contact with each other as well as with other languages of the Caucasus of the Indo-European, Turkic and other origin (Klimov 1994). The widespread multilingualism of most of the speech communities of the Caucasus (Dobrushina 2016) and the wealth and diversity of borrowed material on all levels of grammar (in the form of both matter and/or pattern borrowing (Matras and Sakel 2007a)) make the languages of the area valuable for the theories of language contact as well as for the typology of contact-induced changes.

The present selection of papers focuses on four speech communities of the Caucasus:

- Ardeshen Laz (Kartvelian (/South Caucasian)), being in close contact with Turkish,
- Hinuq (Daghestanian branch of the Northeast Caucasian), being under the strong influence of Russian and Avar (a major Northeast Caucasian language of the area),
- Caucasian Urum (Turkic), being in contact with Russian, and
- Batsbi (Nakh branch of the Northeast Caucasian), a moribund language of Georgia, being under a heavy influence of Georgian.

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1 A very short overview of the papers

The papers in this issue describe different morphosyntactic aspects of both clause-internal and clause-external grammar.

In her paper, “The loss of case system in Ardeshen Laz and its morphosyntactic consequences”, Balkız Öztürk studies the Kartvelian (/South Caucasian) language Laz, the Ardeshen dialect of which has undergone changes in case system under the intensive contact with Turkish. The author compares the facts of case and person marking of this dialect to the data of another dialect, Pazar Laz, to illustrate how the loss of a case marker has affected case agreement in the Ardeshen variety of Laz.

In the paper “The impact of language contact on Hinuq”, Diana Forker looks at the influences of Russian, Avar, Tsez (Northeast Caucasian) and Georgian on Hinuq. The impact of the donor languages on the phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon of the recipient reflects the length and intensity of contact. Georgian has the weakest impact, which gets reflected in lexicon only. Russian influence is stronger, illustrated by borrowings in lexicon and in syntax. Avar seems the strongest donor language for Hinuq, as its impact can be observed not only at lexical and syntactic, but also at the morphological level. Alongside Avar, Hinuq experiences strong influence also from another sister language, Tsez.

The paper by Johanna Lorenz, “Complement clauses in Caucasian Urum” deals with complementation in Caucasian Urum, an endangered variety of Anatolian Turkish spoken in Georgia by ethnic Greeks (Skopeteas 2013), whose ancestors originated from Northeastern Turkey. The language has been in contact with several neighboring languages and was influenced mostly by Russian, which was the official language in the Caucasus when Urum speakers moved there from Turkey. The data considered by Lorenz show that complement clauses of Urum in some respect resemble complement clauses of Russian and deviate from those of Turkic languages. This can be explained by the contact with Russian. However, one should not exclude the involvement of language-internal factors either.

Yasuhiro Kojima, in his paper “The development of person agreement and the cliticization of personal pronouns in Batsbi” discusses the emergence and development of person agreement along with the traditional gender agreement in Batsbi (Holisky and Gagua 1994). Based on the available printed sources, the author overviews the development of agreement marking in Batsbi since the middle of the 19th century up to the modern days. He considers the sister languages Chechen (Nichols 1994a) and Ingush (Nichols 1994b) and the donor

language Georgian to understand what is genealogically inherited and what is contact-induced in Batsbi, and argues for a contact-induced development of person agreement in this language.

2 Affected areas in language contact

In language contact, depending on the length and intensity of interaction, almost anything can be borrowed. However, there are some commonly observed patterns that characterize the nature, intensity and chronology of borrowings. For instance, before borrowing morphological markers, recipient languages would long have borrowed lexical items. Thus, lexicon is the area that would get affected prior to morphology. Or, for instance, before borrowing verbs, the recipient language should have borrowed nouns, etc.

There have been various attempts to compile sets of rules or universals that would reflect such tendencies and behaviors shared by world's languages that are involved in contact. Among such sets of rules is the borrowing scale formulated by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and later revisited by Thomason (2001). According to the scale, which consists of four stages, the degree of borrowing is determined by the intensity of contact between languages:

- Stage 1. *Casual contact*. Borrowers need not be fluent in the source language, and/or there are few bilinguals among borrowing-language speakers. Only lexical borrowing of content words (most often nouns, but also verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) takes place. No change to language structure.
- Stage 2. *Slightly more intense contact*. Borrowers must be bilinguals, but they are probably a minority among borrowing-language speakers. Function words as well as content words are borrowed, still nonbasic vocabulary. Only minor structural borrowing takes place.
- Stage 3. *More intense contact*. More bilinguals, attitudes and other social factors favoring borrowing. More function words as well as basic and nonbasic vocabulary is borrowed. Moderate structural borrowing (no major typological changes) happens.
- Stage 4. *Intense contact*. Very extensive bilingualism among borrowing-language speakers, social factors strongly favoring borrowing. Continuing heavy lexical in all sections of the lexicon, heavy structural borrowing.

According to Thomason (2001: 70–71), on Stage 1 there is no structural borrowing. In lexicon, only content words (mostly nouns, but also verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) are borrowed.

For Stage 2, apart from content words, function words also get borrowed. However, the borrowed lexical items still remain to be of nonbasic vocabulary. There are only minor structural borrowing at this stage, “with no introduction of features that would alter the types of structures found in the borrowing language” (Thomason 2001: 70). For instance, new phonemes will only be present in loanwords but not overtaken in native lexicon as well. There can be an increase in previously rare word orders. Or previously existing syntactic structures could get new functions or functional restrictions.

Stage 3 is characterized by borrowing basic vocabulary, more function words, some closed class items (such as pronouns and/or numerals), as well as derivational morphology (but not inflectional one). In phonology, there can be loss of native phonemes not present in the donor language, addition of new phonemes (in native vocabulary as well), changes to stress placement, syllable structure and morphophonemic rules. On this stage, in syntax word order changes occur, there are changes in syntax of coordination and subordination. As for morphology, inflectional affixes can be borrowed as well.

Stage 4 is characterized by heavy lexical borrowing. In phonology, entire phonetic and/or phonological categories can be lost or added in native words. In morphology, the typological profile can be altered, morphological categories can be added or lost that do not match in source and borrowing languages. In syntax, word order, relative clauses, negation, coordination, subordination, comparison, and quantification can be affected.

The papers presented in this issue deal with the advanced stages of contact, namely stages 3 or 4 of the borrowing scale. Öztürk studies the influence of the case system of the donor language Turkish on the case system of the recipient Laz; Lorenz deals with the changes to the complementation system of the Caucasian Urum under the influence from its long-term donor Russian; Kojima considers the addition of person marking system to the traditionally gender-marking language Batsbi under the influence of the donor Georgian, the language with complex person marking (see Anderson 1984; Boeder 1989; Amiridze 2006: 8–32) among others). The paper by Forker looks at other areas affected by contact as well, including phonology and lexicon.

2.1 Phonological and morphological changes

The change such as losing a vowel in Hinuq after Avar and Tsez, described here by Forker is cross-linguistically highly typical. Phonological structure of a donor frequently affects the structure of a recipient language, especially in the cases of a long and intensive contact. Thomason (2001) attributes the loss of native

phonemes to the stage 3 of the borrowing scale, which implies high level of bilingualism of the speech community, attitudes and other social factors favoring borrowing, as it is the case for Hinuq.

Among the morphological changes discussed here, there is borrowing of derivational affixes from Avar and Tsez into Hinuq. The language does not have borrowed inflectional morphemes. The data could be seen as an illustration of the long noted tendency, according to which derivational affixes are more easily transferable in language contact than inflectional affixes (Weinreich 1953; Thomason and Kaufman 1988). (For more on morphological borrowing see Gardani et al. 2015).

2.2 Syntactic changes

Word order and complementation. Among the syntactic changes dealt with in this issue there is the change from the preferred SOV order to the SVO order in Hinuq after the Russian influence (Forker, this issue) and the changes to expression of complementation under the Russian influence in Caucasian Urum (Lorenz, this issue).

As known, contact most commonly affects word order (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 55, Thomason 2001: 88). In general, word order changes, together with the changes to the syntax of complementation belong to the types of contact-induced changes that are characteristic to more advanced stages of contact (stages 3 and 4 of the borrowing scale). Both Hinuq and Caucasian Urum are highly affected by their donor languages and the changes are in accordance with the borrowing scale.

Loss of case marking. Another syntactic change considered in this issue is the loss of case marking in Laz after the influence of Turkish, resulting in the syntactic change from ergative into nominative alignment marking (Öztürk, this issue).

Such structural change as the reduction or loss of case morphology is well known from the literature on language contact. Among the languages that lost case marking are, for instance, American Hungarian (Fenyvesi 1995), Dyrbal (under the influence of English, (Schmidt 1985)), immigrant varieties of German spoken in the United States (Huffines 1989; Schmid 2002). Interestingly, modern Georgian shows the deletion of the genitive marking in Noun-Noun constructions (Amiridze 2018) after the influence of English Noun-Noun constructs (Bell 2012).

Getting person marking. The next syntactic change studied in this issue is the evolvement of person marking system in Batsbi, in addition to the gender agreement, under the influence of Georgian (Kojima, this issue). This

development, to acquire enclitics (based on the reduced forms of personal pronouns) to mark the first or second person subject argument in the Batsbi verb form, has long been noticed (Holisky and Gagua 1994). This relatively new system of person marking via enclitics co-exists with the traditional system of gender agreement via prefixes (that show agreement in gender with the intransitive subject or the transitive direct object).

This is an example of co-existence of two different agreement systems within one language via language contact to serve the need of bilingual Batsbi speakers to express the same number of arguments in the verb form as the donor language Georgian does. This is a case of pattern borrowing (Sakel 2007, Matras and Sakel 2007a), or replicating structural characteristics of a donor language via the resources available within the recipient language. For more on bilingual speaker's motivations to exploit the potential of his/her bilingual repertoire, illustrated by various cross-linguistic examples, see (Matras and Sakel 2007b).

The papers reflect major issues in contact linguistics research, namely how to distinguish between borrowing and code-switching (Myers-Scotton 2002; Matras 2009) in the speech of communities where practically no monolingual speaker exists (see Forker, this issue) and how to distinguish between genuinely contact-induced change and a genetically inherited development caused by language-internal factors (Aikhenvald and Dixon 2001; Johanson and Robbeets 2012) (see Lorenz, this issue).

3 Conclusion

The works presented in this special issue illustrate language change in contact settings that involve Ardeshen Laz, Hinuq, Caucasian Urum and Batsbi in a close contact with the donor languages such as Turkish, Russian, and Georgian. The changes described and discussed here are a result of a long and intense contact between the donor and recipient languages. Some of the borrowing languages are in contact with more than one language and, in fact, illustrate developments that result from the influence of several different source languages. Such multilingual societies are well known in the literature where it is not always possible to determine exactly which source language has contributed to the change. Other times, there is no sufficient evidence for a contact explanation and further research is needed to argue either for a borrowing scenario or for the one of genealogical inheritance.

As many languages of the Caucasus have no written tradition, and the only available data are synchronic, forming a hypothesis regarding contact-induced

development in the absence of historical linguistic arguments becomes almost an impossible task, unless one has a clear understanding of historical socio-linguistic context.

The study of linguistic behavior in contact situations, as this journal issue also illustrates, is a highly complex endeavor requiring not just the knowledge of the languages in contact but also the knowledge of the history of respective speech communities.

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