

The Handbook of Language Contact

Edited by

Raymond Hickey

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The Handbook of Language Contact

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Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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Notes on Contributors

UMBERTO ANSALDO is Associate Professor in Linguistics at The University of Hong Kong. He was formerly a Senior Researcher with the Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication and a Lecturer in Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam. He has also worked in Sweden and Singapore and conducted fieldwork in China, the Cocos and Christmas Islands, and Sri Lanka. He is the co-editor of the Creole Language Library Series and has co-edited various journals and books including *Deconstructing Creole* (2007, John Benjamins). He is the author of *Contact Languages: Ecology and Evolution in Asia* (2009, Cambridge University Press).

CLAIRE BOWERN is Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Yale University. Since graduating with a PhD from Harvard in 2004, she has focused research in two areas: language documentation and description in Indigenous Australia, and historical linguistics and prehistory. Her most recent publications include *Morphology and Language History* (edited with Bethwyn Evans and Luisa Miceli, 2008, John Benjamins) and *Linguistic Fieldwork: A Practical Guide* (2008, Palgrave Macmillan).

DAVID BRITAIN is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Bern in Switzerland. He came to Essex in 1993 after having spent two years as a Postdoctoral Fellow at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. His research interests are in dialect contact and mobility, geolinguistics, and the non-standard Englishes of southern England and the Southern Hemisphere. He is editor of *Language in the British Isles* (2007, Cambridge University Press), co-editor, with Jenny Cheshire, of *Social Dialectology* (2003, John Benjamins), and co-author, with Andrew Radford, Martin Atkinson, Harald Clahsen, and Andrew Spencer, of *Linguistics: An Introduction* (2009, second edition, Cambridge University Press).

G. TUCKER CHILDS received his PhD from the University of California (Berkeley), and has taught at and been associated with research institutions and universities

in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Africa. He is now Professor of Applied Linguistics at Portland State University (Oregon, USA). His research interests are located primarily in Africa and include phonology and morphology, typology, variation and change, contact linguistics, and sociolinguistics. Current research focuses on documenting the moribund languages of the South Atlantic in Guinea and Sierra Leone. Two publications from his last project are *A Grammar of Mani* (Mouton de Gruyter) and a Mani primer.

KAREN P. CORRIGAN is currently Professor of Linguistics and English Language at Newcastle University, UK. Her main research interests are sociolinguistic variation, language contact (from a formal syntactic perspective), language shift and change. She has recently published *Syntax and Variation* (with Leonie Cornips, 2005, John Benjamins) and *Creating and Digitizing Language Corpora, vols. 1 and 2* (with Joan Beal and Hermann Moisl, 2007, Palgrave-Macmillan).

JOSEPH F. ESKA received his PhD from the University of Toronto in 1988. He is now Professor of Linguistics at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. His primary research focus is on language change, especially with regard to the Celtic languages, and methodology in diachronic linguistics. Some of his recent significant publications are "Recent work in computational linguistic phylogeny," *Language* 80 (with Don Ringe, 2004), "Observations on verbal art in ancient Vergiate," *Historische Sprachforschung* 118, (with Angelo O. Mercado, 2005), and "Bergin's Rule: Syntactic diachrony and discourse strategy," *Diachronica* 24 (2007).

MARKKU FILPPULA is Professor of English Language at the University of Joensuu, Finland. Markku Filppula is known for his original research into questions of language contact (in the context of Irish and Scottish English) and into the role of dialect input in varieties of English. His recent publications include *The Grammar of Irish English: Language in Hibernian Style* (1999, Routledge), *The Celtic Roots of English* (edited with Juhani Klemola and Heli Pitkänen, 2002, University of Joensuu), and *English and Celtic in Contact* (with Juhani Klemola and Heli Paulasto, 2008, Routledge).

WILLIAM A. FOLEY is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. His main research interests are in the languages and cultures of island Southeast Asia and the Pacific, particularly the New Guinea region. He has undertaken in situ fieldwork in this region for some three decades now and has written extensively on its languages. He is particularly interested in the usefulness of modern grammatical theories in the description of these languages, as attested in publications like *The Papuan Languages of New Guinea* (1986, Cambridge University Press) and *The Yimas Language of New Guinea* (1991, Stanford University Press). His other main area of interest, again one forged ultimately out of interest in fieldwork, is anthropological linguistics, reflected in *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction* (1997, Blackwell).

CARMEN FOUGHT is a Professor of Linguistics at Pitzer College, in Claremont, California. She is the author of *Chicano English in Context* (2002, Palgrave Macmillan) and *Language and Ethnicity* (2006, Cambridge University Press). Her research focuses on issues of language and ethnic identity, the dialects of California, and bilingual acquisition. She is currently studying the representation of language in the media, including films, television, and commercials.

PENELOPE GARDNER-CHLOROS is Lecturer at the School of Languages, Linguistics and Culture, Birkbeck College, London. Her main research is into code-switching from a grammatical, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic perspective. She has pursued this line of research for many years by examining French and Alsatian along with English and Greek code-switching. Her most recent publication is the monograph *Code-Switching* (2009, Cambridge University Press).

LENORE A. GRENOBLE (PhD 1986, University of California, Berkeley) holds a joint appointment in the Department of Linguistics and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago. Her research interests include Slavic, Tungusic and other languages of the North, discourse and conversation analysis, deixis, contact linguistics and language endangerment, attrition, and revitalization. Her fieldwork focuses on languages of Siberia and she is currently engaged in research on the interrelations between language shift, cultural change, and the environment in the North. Her recent publications include *Saving Languages*, co-authored with Lindsay J. Whaley (2006, Cambridge University Press); *Endangered Languages: Current Issues and Future Prospects*, co-edited with Lindsay J. Whaley (1998, Cambridge University Press); *Language Policy in the Former Soviet Union* (2003, Kluwer); *Evenki*, co-authored with Nadezhda Ja. Bulatova (1999); and *Deixis and Information Packaging in Russian Discourse* (1998, John Benjamins).

BERND HEINE is Emeritus Professor at the Institute of African Studies, University of Cologne, presently visiting professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. His 33 books include *Auxiliaries: Cognitive Forces and Grammaticalization* (1993, Oxford University Press), *Possession Cognitive Sources, Forces, and Grammaticalization* (1997, Cambridge University Press), *Cognitive Foundations of Grammar* (1997, Oxford University Press), *African Languages: An Introduction* (with Derek Nurse, 2000, Cambridge University Press), *A Linguistic Geography of Africa* (2008, Cambridge University Press). The following were co-authored with Tania Kuteva: *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization* (2002, Cambridge University Press), *Language Contact and Grammatical Change* (2005, Cambridge University Press), *The Changing Languages of Europe* (2006, Oxford University Press), *The Genesis of Grammar* (2008, Oxford University Press).

RAYMOND HICKEY is Chair of Linguistics at the Department of English, Essen University, Germany. His main research interests are the history and varieties of English (especially Irish English), Dublin English, and general questions of

language contact, shift and change. Among his recent book publications are *A Source Book for Irish English* (2002, John Benjamins), *Motives for Language Change* (ed., 2003, Cambridge University Press), *A Sound Atlas of Irish English* (2004, Mouton de Gruyter), *Legacies of Colonial English* (ed., 2004, Cambridge University Press), *Dublin English: Evolution and Change* (2005, John Benjamins), *Irish English: History and Present-Day Forms* (2007, Cambridge University Press), and *Eighteenth-Century English: Ideology and Change* (ed., 2010, Cambridge University Press).

JOHN HOLM has a doctoral degree in linguistics from the University of London (1978). He taught at the College of the Bahamas and the City University of New York and has held the chair of English linguistics at the University of Coimbra in Portugal since 1998. His research focuses on the origins of creole structures and social factors affecting the gradient nature of creolization. He is the author of *Pidgins and Creoles* (1988–9, two vols.) and recently co-edited *Contact Languages: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (2008, five vols.) with Susanne Michaelis. He is a founding member of the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics and of the Associação: Crioulos de Base Lexical Portuguesa e Espanhola.

LARS JOHANSON is Professor of Turcology at the Oriental Institute of the University of Mainz, Germany. He has published extensively on synchronic and diachronic linguistics, especially in the domains of aspect-mood-tense, language contact, and language typology. Most of his publications focus on the Turkic language family. He is the editor-in-chief of the journal *Turkic Languages* and the book series *Turcologica*.

BRIAN D. JOSEPH is Distinguished University Professor of Linguistics and The Kenneth E. Naylor Professor of South Slavic Linguistics at The Ohio State University, where he has taught since 1979. He received his PhD from Harvard University in 1978, writing his dissertation on syntactic change between Medieval and Modern Greek. Brian Joseph specializes in historical linguistics, Greek linguistics, and Balkan linguistics, and has published extensively in these areas, including the monograph *The Synchrony and Diachrony of the Balkan Infinitive: A Study in Areal, General, and Historical Linguistics* (1983, Cambridge University Press). He served as editor of *Diachronica* from 1999 to 2001 and as editor of *Language* from 2002 to 2008.

PAUL KERSWILL is a social dialectologist, with a special interest in dialect contact. His first major study was on rural migrants in the Norwegian city of Bergen, but he is perhaps best known for his work (with Ann Williams and Jenny Cheshire) on the new dialect of Milton Keynes in England, followed by studies on the development of a Multicultural London English. He worked at the universities of Durham, Cambridge, and Reading before being appointed Professor of Sociolinguistics at Lancaster in 2004. His books are *Dialects Converging: Rural Speech in Urban Norway* (1994, Oxford University Press) and *Dialect Change: Convergence and Divergence in European Languages* (co-edited with Peter Auer and Frans Hinskens, 2005, Cambridge University Press).

TANIA KUTEVA is full Professor of English Linguistics at the Heinrich-Heine University of Düsseldorf, Germany. Her major publications are in the field of grammaticalization, grammatical typology and language contact. She is the author of *Auxiliation: An Enquiry into the Nature of Grammaticalization* (2001, Oxford University Press). The following were co-authored with Bernd Heine: *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization* (2002, Cambridge University Press), *Language Contact and Grammatical Change* (2005, Cambridge University Press), *The Changing Languages of Europe* (2006, Oxford University Press), and *The Genesis of Grammar* (2008, Oxford University Press).

JOHANNA LAAKSO graduated and gained her PhD at the University of Helsinki, Finland, where she also led a research project on the Finnic languages in the 1990s. Since 2000, she has been Professor of Finno-Ugric studies at the University of Vienna, Austria. Her research interests include historical and contact linguistics, gender linguistics, and multilingualism. She has published three monographs (most recently, *Our Otherness: Finno-Ugrian Approaches to Women's Studies, or Vice Versa* 2005, LIT Verlag Münster) along with several edited volumes and various articles in altogether six languages.

JOHN M. LIPSKI is Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Spanish and Linguistics at the Pennsylvania State University. His research focuses on regional and social variation in Spanish, particularly in contact situations, as well as the contributions of the African diaspora to the diversification of Spanish. He is the author of more than 200 articles, and the following books: *Afro-Bolivian Spanish* (in press, Iberoamericana), *Varieties of Spanish in the United States* (in press, Georgetown University Press), *A History of Afro-Hispanic Language* (2005, Cambridge University Press), *Latin American Spanish* (1994, Longmans, also translated into Spanish and Japanese), *The Speech of the Negros Congos of Panama* (1989, John Benjamins), *The Language of the Isleños of Louisiana* (1990, Louisiana State University Press), *Fonética y fonología del español de Honduras* (1987, Editorial Guaymuras), *The Spanish of Equatorial Guinea* (1985, Max Niemeyer), *Linguistic Aspects of Spanish-English Language Switching* (1985, Latin American Studies Center), *El español de Malabo* (1990, Centro Cultural Hispano-Guineano), and (with the late Eduardo Neale-Silva), *El español en síntesis* (1981, Holt, Rinehart & Winston).

YARON MATRAS is Professor of Linguistics at School of Languages, Linguistics, and Cultures, University of Manchester, and author of numerous studies in contact linguistics, historical linguistics and dialectology, and linguistic typology, among them *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction* (2002, Cambridge University Press), *Markedness and Language Change: The Romani Sample* (with Viktor Elšík, 2006, Mouton de Gruyter), and *Language Contact* (2009, Cambridge University Press).

STEPHEN MATTHEWS is Associate Professor in Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong, specializing in language typology, contact, and bilingualism. His books include *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* (1994, Routledge) and *The Bilingual*

Child: Early Development and Language Contact (2007, Cambridge University Press), both co-authored with Virginia Yip.

PATRICK McCONVELL received his PhD for a thesis on Hausa syntax and semantics from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London in 1973. He moved to Australia where he has engaged in linguistic and anthropological research with indigenous groups, mainly in the Northern Territory and the north of Western Australia. He has taught linguistics and anthropology at Northern Territory University (now Charles Darwin University) and Griffith University, and from 2000 to 2008 was Research Fellow in Language and Society, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra. He is now a researcher at the Australian National University, working on Australian indigenous kinship and hunter-gatherer language change.

APRIL McMAHON is Vice-Principal and Head of the College of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Edinburgh, where she also holds the Forbes Chair of English Language. Her main research interests are in historical linguistics, phonological theory, accents of English, and interdisciplinary approaches to language families and linguistic similarity. Her books include *Understanding Language Change* (1994, Cambridge University Press), *Lexical Phonology and the History of English* (2000, Cambridge University Press), *Language Classification by Numbers* (with Rob McMahon, 2005, Oxford University Press), and *The Handbook of English Linguistics* (co-edited with Bas Aarts, 2006, Blackwell).

RAJEND MESTHRIE is Professor of Linguistics in the Department of English at the University of Cape Town, where he holds a National Research Foundation chair. He is currently President of the Linguistics Society of Southern Africa. Amongst his publications are the *Concise Encyclopedia of Sociolinguistics* (ed., 2001, Pergamon), and *English in Language Shift: The History, Structure and Sociolinguistics of South African Indian English* (1992, Cambridge University Press), *Language in South Africa* (ed., 2002, Cambridge University Press), and *World Englishes* (with Rakesh Bhatt, 2008, Cambridge University Press).

MARIANNE MITHUN is Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her work ranges over morphology, syntax, discourse, prosody, and their interactions; language change, particularly the development of grammatical structure, and language contact. She works with speakers of a number of languages indigenous to North America on documentation, education, and revitalization projects. She is the author of the comprehensive overview *The Languages of Native North America*. (1999, Cambridge University Press).

PIETER MUYSKEN is Professor of Linguistics at Radboud University Nijmegen. His research is focused on language contact both in the Netherlands and in the Caribbean and South America. Recent books include *Bilingual Speech: A Typology of Code-Mixing* (2000, Cambridge University Press), with William Adelaar *The*

Languages of the Andes (2004, Cambridge University Press), and *Functional Categories* (2008, Cambridge University Press).

JOHANNA NICHOLS is Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Affiliate Professor in the Department of Linguistics, University of California, Berkeley. She works on typology, historical linguistics, and Slavic languages as well as on Ingush and Chechen of the East Caucasian family. Together with Balthasar Bickel she co-founded and co-directs the Autotyp typological project (www.uni-leipzig.de/~autotyp). Her publications include *Linguistic Diversity in Space and Time* (1992, University of Chicago Press), dictionaries of Ingush and Chechen (2004, Routledge/Curzon), and a grammar of Ingush (forthcoming, University of California Publications in Linguistics).

MICHAEL NOONAN received a PhD in linguistics from the University of California at Los Angeles and was Professor of Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He published widely on general typology, contact linguistics, the grammar of subordination, grammaticalization, languages of the Bodic division of Tibeto-Burman, the Western Nilotic language Lango, and Irish. In addition, he was editor of the journal *Studies in Language* with Bernard Comrie and of two book series for John Benjamins: the *Typological Studies in Language* series and the *Studies in Language Companion Series*, the latter with Werner Abraham.

BRIGITTE PAKENDORF is a molecular anthropologist and linguist working on linguistic and genetic effects of prehistoric population contact. She currently leads the interdisciplinary Max Planck Research Group on Comparative Population Linguistics at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. Her own research has focused on the genetic prehistory and linguistic contact situation of the Turkic-speaking Sakha (Yakuts) and Tungusic-speaking Ä-vens of northeastern Siberia. Her publications include molecular anthropological studies of Siberian populations as well as papers on aspects of Sakha grammar, a monograph investigating the contact-induced changes undergone by Sakha, as well as papers on language contact in other Siberian groups.

THOMAS PURNELL (PhD, University of Delaware) is Assistant Professor of Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His teaching focus is on phonetics, phonology, field methods, language variation, and language change. His main research interest is on variation within sound systems, particularly in ethnically affiliated Upper Midwestern US English. His research has appeared in *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *Journal of English Linguistics*, and *American Speech*.

PAUL ROBERGE is Professor of Germanic Languages and joint Professor of Linguistics at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He also holds the title of Professor Extraordinary of General Linguistics at the University of Stellenbosch. His teaching and research interests are historical Germanic linguistics,

sociohistorical linguistics, pidgin and creole languages, and Afrikaans. He has also written on the origin and evolution of human language. His most recent publication is "The creation of pidgins as a possible window on language evolution" in *Language Evolution: The View from Restricted Linguistic Systems* (edited by Rudolf P. Botha and Henritte de Swart, 2008, LOT Occasional Series, 8, Utrecht).

SUZANNE ROMAINE is Merton Professor of English Language, University of Oxford. She has a wide range of linguistic interests and qualifications which are amply attested in the many monograph publications on different spheres which she has produced over nearly three decades. Among her many books are the following: *Socio-Historical Linguistics: Its Status and Methodology* (1982, Cambridge University Press), *Pidgin and Creole Languages* (1988, Longman), *Bilingualism* (1995 [1989], Blackwell), *Language in Australia* (1991, Cambridge University Press), *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (2000 [1994], Oxford University Press), *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages* (with Daniel Nettle, 2000, Oxford University Press), *Tok Pisin Texts: From the Beginning to the Present* (edited with Peter Mühlhäusler and Thomas E. Dutton, 2003, John Benjamins).

JOSEPH SALMONS holds a BA in Philosophy (University of North Carolina–Charlotte, 1978) and a PhD in Germanic Linguistics (University of Texas, 1984). He is Professor of German and Director of the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. His research and teaching focus on speech sounds and language change, drawing data particularly from Germanic languages, including current Wisconsin English. He is co-author of the forthcoming *Cambridge History of the Germanic Languages*, co-editor of the Oxford *Handbook of Historical Phonology*, and executive editor of *Diachronica: International Journal for Historical Linguistics*.

HAROLD F. SCHIFFMAN is Professor Emeritus of Dravidian Linguistics and Culture, University of Pennsylvania. His research interests focus on the linguistics of the Dravidian languages, especially Tamil and Kannada, and on language policy. He has published in these two areas where overlapping interests in sociolinguistics (diglossia, language standardization, grammaticalization, and multilingualism) intersect with language policy and the politics of language. He is also director of the Consortium for Language Policy and Planning. Recent publications include *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (1996, Routledge) and *A Reference Grammar of Spoken Tamil* (1999, Cambridge University Press).

EDGAR W. SCHNEIDER is full Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Regensburg, Germany, after previous appointments in Bamberg, Georgia, and Berlin. He has written and edited several books (including *American Earlier Black English*, 1989, University of Alabama Press; *Introduction to Quantitative Analysis of Linguistic Survey Data*, with William Kretzschmar, 1996, Sage; *Focus on the USA*, 1996, John Benjamins; *Englishes Around the World*, 1997, John Benjamins; *Degrees*

of *Restructuring in Creole Languages*, with Ingrid Neumann-Holzschuh, 2000, John Benjamins; *Handbook of Varieties of English*, co-edited with Bernd Kortmann, 2004, Mouton de Gruyter; *Postcolonial English*, 2007, Cambridge University Press) and published and lectured widely on the dialectology, sociolinguistics, history, semantics and varieties of English, and edits the scholarly journal *English World-Wide* along with an associated book series.

JEFF SIEGEL is Adjunct Professor in Linguistics at the University of New England in Australia. His main research is on the origins of contact languages (such as pidgins, creoles and koines), and the current use of these languages, especially in formal education. He has worked on Melanesian Pidgin, Hawai'i Creole, Fiji Hindi, Pidgin Fijian, and Pidgin Hindustani. His publications include *Pidgin Grammar: An Introduction to the Creole Language of Hawai'i* (with Kent Sakoda, 2003, Bess Press) and *The Emergence of Pidgin and Creole Languages* (2008, Oxford University Press).

SARAH THOMASON received her PhD from Yale in 1968 and taught there and at the University of Pittsburgh before moving to the University of Michigan in 1999. Her current research focuses on contact-induced language change and Salishan linguistics. Apart from the monograph *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (with Terrence Kaufman, 1988, University of California Press,) and *Language Contact: An Introduction* (2001, Edinburgh University Press) she has published many articles recently, including "Pronoun borrowing" (with Daniel Everett, 2005, *Berkeley Linguistics Society* 27).

PETER TRUDGILL has carried out research on dialects of English, Norwegian, Greek, Albanian, and Spanish and has published more than 30 books on sociolinguistics and dialectology. He was Professor of Linguistics at the University of Reading, UK; Professor of Sociolinguistics at the University of Essex, UK; Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland; and Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. He is currently Emeritus Professor of English Linguistics at Fribourg University, Adjunct Professor of Sociolinguistics, Agder University, Kristiansand, Norway; and Adjunct Professor at the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Academy. He is writing a book to be entitled *Sociolinguistic Typology: Language in Contact and Isolation*.

THEO VENNEMANN GEN. NIERFELD, studied mathematics, physics, Germanic philology, Indo-European, and philosophy in Göttingen, Marburg, and Los Angeles. He received his PhD in Germanic Languages from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1968 and taught there as professor until 1974. He then took up the the Chair of Germanic and Theoretical Linguistics at the University of Munich until his retirement in 2005. His research interests include phonology, word order, metrics, the theory of language change, the history of German and other Indo-European languages, and the linguistic prehistory of Europe

as reflected in external influences on Indo-European. Most of his work on Vasconic influences is included in his book *Europa Vasconica – Europa Semitica* (edited by Patrizia Noel Aziz Hanna, 2003, Mouton de Gruyter). A bibliography can be found in David Restle and Dietmar Zaefferer (eds.), *Sounds and Systems: Studies in Structure and Change* (2002, Mouton de Gruyter).

KEES VERSTEEGH is professor of Arabic and Islam at the University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands. He has written about the history of the Arabic grammatical tradition and about the history of Arabic. His publications include *Pidginization and Creolization: The Case of Arabic* (1984, John Benjamins), and *The Arabic Language* (1997, Edinburgh University Press). He is the editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (4 vols., 2006–9, Brill).

DONALD WINFORD is Professor of Linguistics at Ohio State University. His research interests include sociolinguistics, contact linguistics, creole linguistics as well as African American English. He is currently editor of the *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* and the author of *Predication in Caribbean English Creoles* (1993, John Benjamins) and *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics* (2003, Blackwell).

Preface

Contact studies is a field of linguistics which has been the subject of increasing interest in the past few decades and the present volume is intended to reflect this interest by gathering together contributions by leading authors in the field. The volume deals with both individual cases of language contact and more general issues of the relationship of contact studies to other areas of linguistics. The individual studies are exemplary illustrations of a range of contact scenarios while the more general chapters deal with the interface of language contact with such areas as typology, language history, dialectology, sociolinguistics, and pidgin and creole studies.

The genesis of this volume was marked by a fruitful collaboration between the editor and the colleagues who contributed. This congenial experience was unfortunately overshadowed by the death of one of the scholars in the project, Michael Noonan (1948–2009) of the University of Wisconsin, known affectionately as “Mickey” to his friends. His sudden departure was an unexpected and painful loss to all who knew him.

The work on this project was greatly facilitated by the efficiency, professionalism, and helpfulness shown by the staff of Wiley-Blackwell, in particular by Danielle Descoteaux, Julia Kirk, and Anna Oxbury. To them I would like to express my sincere thanks for all that they have done in the production of this volume.

Raymond Hickey

Language Contact: Reconsideration and Reassessment

RAYMOND HICKEY

The most cursory glance at linguistic publications in the past few decades reveals a wealth of literature on language contact: articles, monographs, edited volumes, special issues of journals (see the references in the literature section to this chapter).¹ It is perhaps true to say that one of the major impulses for research in the past two decades must surely have been the publication of Sandra Thomason and Terrence Kaufman's large-scale study of various contact scenarios with many generalizations about the nature of contact and the range of its possible effects (Thomason & Kaufman 1988). Due to the carefully mounted cases and several stringent analyses, this study led to the re-invigorization of language contact studies and the re-valorization of language contact as a research area. As well as highlighting the field of language contact within linguistics, the study also allowed for virtually any type of change as a result of language contact, given appropriate circumstances to trigger this.

Contact studies from the 1960s and 1970s are not anything like as copious as in the ensuing decades. There are reasons for this. While the classic study of language contact by Uriel Weinreich was published in 1953, the following two decades were years which saw not just the heyday of early generative linguistics but also the rise of sociolinguistics, and it was those two directions in linguistics which were to dominate the research activity of scholars for a number of decades.

Language contact was at the center of work by scholars somewhat outside the mainstream. Smaller departments at universities, dealing with non-Indo-European languages or Indo-European ones apart from the Germanic and Romance languages, often produced research in which contact was pivotal. But for scholars in the English-speaking world, or dealing with varieties of English, language contact was not a primary concern during the 1960s and 1970s. Apart from the dominance of other approaches to linguistics at this time, there were further reasons for the relative neglect of language contact. Older literature which looked at contact tended to assume uncritically that contact was always the source of new features registered in particular languages, assuming the presence of at least two in any given scenario. Furthermore, early studies did not

necessarily provide rigorous taxonomies for the various types of language contact and their effects (though Weinreich is a laudable exception in this respect). Nor did they usually distinguish individual tokens of language contact from the contact of language systems and the indirect effects which the latter situation could have.

Overviews of aspects of language which also touched on contact did of course have relevant chapters, e.g. that by Moravcsik (1978) in the Greenberg volumes on language universals. And the early 1980s did see studies of language contact, e.g. Heath (1984), but other suggestions for the triggers of language change were preferred, at least in mainstream language studies, such as varieties of English, see Harris (1984), an influential article arguing against the role of contact in the rise of varieties of English in Ireland.

1 Recent Studies of Language Contact

The stimulus provided by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) is in evidence, directly or indirectly, in the many publications which appeared during the 1990s and into the 2000s. Some of these are in a more traditional style, e.g. Ureland and Broderick (1991), but others show a linguistically nuanced analysis of the effects of contact, see the contributions in Fisiak (1995) and Thomason (1997b), along with the typological overview in Thomason (1997a). Indeed these publications often contain a blend of contact studies and a further approach in linguistics, consider the sociolinguistically based investigation of language contact in Japan by Loveday (1996) or the large-scale typological studies in Dutton and Tryon (1994).

The 2000s opened with a number of analyses of different contact scenarios. There is the general overview of language contact and change by Frans van Coetsem (van Coetsem 2000) along with the overview article by Thomason (2000), the study of contact within the context of the Slavic languages² by Gilbers, Nerbonne, and Schaeken (2000) and the investigation of lexical change due to contact in King (2000),³ to mention just three of the publications from this year.

2001 saw the publication of Sarah Thomason's introduction to language contact (Thomason 2001) and of a volume on language contact and the history of English (Kastovsky and Mettinger 2001), as well as the overview of features in English-lexicon contact languages (pidgins and creoles) by Baker and Huber (2001). The latter type of investigation characterizes volumes such as that by McWhorter (2000), the full-length study by Migge (2003), the edited volume by Escure and Schwegler (2004), as well as the special journal issue by Clements and Gooden (2009).

Clyne (2003) is a monograph which examined language contact between English and immigrant languages in Australia. This type of contact is grounded in bilingualism, an avenue of research which has been pursued in recent years, see Myers-Scotton (2002) as a representative example. Further studies concern other kinds of contact-based varieties of English far from the European context, e.g. Chinese Englishes, see Bolton (2003).

Language contact, linguistic areas, and typology

Research into language families and linguistic areas received considerable impetus during the 2000s. The native languages of northern South America were scrutinized in Aikhenvald (2002a, 2002b). This vein of investigation was continued with Aikhenvald and Dixon (2006). Johanson (2002) looked at structural change in the Turkic languages which can be traced to contact (see Johanson, this volume, as well). Similar studies from the early 2000s, e.g. Haspelmath (2001), attest to this revitalized interest in the study of linguistic areas (Matras, McMahon, & Vincent, 2006).

Language typology and its connection with language contact is a theme in studies which congregate around families and areas, see the contributions in Haspelmath et al. (2001), Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001), Aikhenvald and Dixon (2006), and also in association with the issue of language development and complexity, see the chapters in Miestamo, Sinnemäki, and Karlsson (2008) and the study by Mufwene (2008).

Furthermore, there are languages whose entire development and history is dominated by contact with other languages: Romani and Yiddish are good examples of this situation, see Matras (1995; 2002) and Jacobs (2005) on these two languages respectively.

Several studies of contact have stretched backwards to reach greater time depth using the tools of contemporary linguistics.⁴ Ross (2003) is an example of this in his investigation of prehistoric language contact. Salmons and Joseph (1998) look at the evidence for and against Nostratic, an undertaking in which contact is center-stage. For contact and early Finno-Ugric, see Laakso (this volume) and for contact and Arabic, see Versteegh (this volume).

The investigation of languages which have virtually no written records presents a special set of problems. This is particularly true of native American languages (Mithun, this volume), of African languages (Childs, this volume), of Australian languages (McConvell, this volume) and of languages in New Guinea (Foley, this volume).

Language contact and mixed languages

Not unrelated to this type of situation is that of mixed languages, the result not just of contact but of fusion, to which the attention of the scholarly community was drawn by a number of seminal publications, among the earliest of which was Muysken (1981) which presented the case of *Media Lengua*, a mixture of Quechua and Spanish (see Muysken 1997 for a later overview). A broader perspective was provided by the collection of studies on a number of mixed languages to be found in Bakker and Mous (1994). Cases of mixed languages have also been reported in language endangerment situations, e.g. that of light Warlpiri in Northern Australia (O'Shannessy 2005). An instance of a mixed language from the Slavic area would be *Surzhyk*, a blend of Russian and Ukrainian, see Grenoble (this volume). A further example is *Trasianka* (a blend of Belarussian

and Russian). The Romance languages also have similar mixtures which arose due to contact, e.g. that between Portuguese and Spanish in the border areas of Brazil and Uruguay, see remarks by Lipski (this volume) on *portunhol/fronterizo*.

Language contact, obsolescence, and death

Language obsolescence (Dorian 1989) and language death (Nettle & Romaine 2000; Romaine, this volume; Harrison 2007) are further issues closely related to language contact. After all, the endangerment of a language always goes hand in hand with contact with one or more dominant languages, the latter threatening the continuing existence of the minority language, or indeed in many cases leading to its disappearance.

Language contact and grammaticalization

The study of grammaticalization received significant impulses from the research of Elizabeth Traugott, Bernd Heine, and Paul Hopper in a number of landmark publications, such as Traugott and Heine (2001), as well as the accessible textbook, Hopper and Traugott (2003 [1993]). In the context of the present volume the focus on grammaticalization and language contact⁵ was made in the programmatic article by Heine and Kuteva (2003) which was followed up by the full-length study Heine and Kuteva (2005), see Heine and Kuteva (this volume), as well.

Language contact and older hypotheses

The assessment of language contact in the history of established languages is a matter which has varied in the relevant scholarship. For the history of English it is clear that the influence of other languages – bar Latin, Old Norse, and Anglo-Norman – has been played down by the majority of scholars in the field.⁶ But in recent years, a reexamination and reassessment of the role of contact in the development of the Germanic dialects in the period subsequent to the transportation to England has taken place. Specifically, the role of British Celtic in this context has been highlighted by publications such as Filppula, Klemola, and Pitkänen (2002), Filppula, Klemola, and Paulasto (2008), and Hickey (1995b), re-connecting to an older hypothesis put forward by German and Scandinavian scholars in the first half of the twentieth century, see Preußler (1938), Dal (1952), and Braaten (1967). Contact as a source of change has been further extended to encompass later, nonstandard features of English such as the so-called Northern Subject Rule, see Klemola (2000). For details on the “Celtic hypothesis” in the history of English, see Filppula (this volume).

Language and/or dialect contact

It is obvious that the difference between language contact and dialect contact is more one of degree than of kind. The interaction of dialects with one another is a topic which received considerable impetus from Peter Trudgill’s 1986 study

Dialects in Contact after which the treatment of this subject was seen as on a par with that of languages in contact. Given the great diversity of varieties of English, this approach proved to be fruitful in the anglophone world and has been adopted by many scholars since, especially by considering the notion of accommodation together with existing data not hitherto analyzed from this perspective. Dialects in contact are treated in this volume in the contributions by David Britain and Paul Kerswill (in the context of new varieties) as well as Joseph Salmons and Thomas Purnell (in the context of American English).

Language contact in English studies

In English studies the significance of contact in the rise of nonstandard vernaculars was given increasing recognition during the 1980s. Rickford (1986) is a well-known example of work in this vein, here with specific reference to dialect transportation and contact at overseas locations. However, not all scholars saw contact as a prime source of new features in varieties, some put more emphasis on the continuation of vernacular traits at new locations. This stance forms the so-called retentionist hypothesis which enjoyed greatest favor among Anglicists; a key article for this view is Harris (1984). However, by the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, the considered case for contact in certain scenarios regained acceptance and was underlined by key publications such as Mesthrie (1992) which showed clearly the role contact played in the rise of South African Indian English. The dichotomy of contact versus retention continued to occupy scholars into the 2000s, see Filppula (2003) which provides a fresh look at the arguments. The role of contact in the formation of different varieties of English at various geographical locations has been considered, e.g. Bao (2005) which examines substratist influence on the aspectual system of English in Singapore. For contact and African Englishes, see Mesthrie (this volume) and for Asian Englishes, see Ansaldo (this volume).

Vernacular universals and contact

The notion of vernacular universals is something which has been dealt with by Anglicists in recent years, above all by Jack Chambers (see Chambers 2004). It refers to features found across varieties of English in different parts of the world and postulates that the occurrence of such features is due to universals of language development, specifically in the context of new dialect formation (see Gold 2009, for example). The issue has spawned a number of publications the most comprehensive of which is the volume by Filppula, Klemola, and Paulasto (2009b) in which vernacular universals are viewed within the framework of language contact, see the introduction to that volume (Filppula et al. 2009a) and also the contribution by Donald Winford (Winford 2009).

Sociolinguistic perspectives on language contact

An emphasis on the social setting in which language contact can take place is found in many publications, e.g. those in Potowski and Cameron (2007) on

Spanish and contact and in particular in studies of pidgins and creoles (Deumert and Durlmann 2006; Holm, this volume; Schneider, this volume). Studies like Siegel (1987), where the plantation environment of the Fiji Islands in the nineteenth century is investigated, implicitly adopt this stance. The role of substrate in the rise of these contact languages has also been pursued in other publications by Siegel (1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2008, this volume). In a far-eastern context this issue has also been broached, see the discussion in Matthews (this volume).

In handbooks on sociolinguistics and models of socially determined language change, chapters on contact can also be found, e.g. Sankoff (2002) in the *Handbook of Language Variation and Change* (Chambers, Trudgill, & Schilling-Estes 2002).

A broader view than just the social setting can be found in considerations of a language's ecology, see Mufwene (2001, 2007) and the discussion in Ansaldo (this volume).

Contact in urban environments

In the past, contact studies did not usually deal with the rural–urban dichotomy, probably because at the time at which the contact is assumed to have taken place this division was not relevant for the communities in question. However, contemporary investigations of contact, either interlinguistic or intralinguistic, are frequently of urban scenarios, e.g. Silva-Corvalán's 1994 study of Spanish and English in Los Angeles or Hickey's 2005 study of language variation and change in Dublin, where dissociation (Hickey 2000), triggered by internal contact between differing varieties in the city, has been the driving factor. Other urban environments have provided further examples of change and development through contact, e.g. the creative language mixture found in the Sheng and English codes in urban Kenya (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997).

Overviews of language contact

The increase in the data⁷ on language contact⁸ has led to more general reflections on the nature of contact and its effects. This is something which can be observed in other fields as well. Once most of the groundwork has been done and bodies of data have been collected, scholars begin to reflect on the status of the field as a scholarly endeavor. It is in this light that one can view publications like those by Donald Winford, e.g. Winford (2005, 2008), and indeed the chapters in the first three sections of the present volume, "Contact and Linguistics," "Contact and Change," and "Contact and Society" respectively.

A further sign of the maturity of a field is the publication of handbooks dedicated to it. This shows that it has become sufficiently mainstream for it to appear in dedicated courses at universities and hence to be worthy of handbook treatment. The readiness of publishers to accept such volumes is evidenced by the handbooks by Goebel et al. (1996), Donald Winford (Winford 2003) and Yaron Matras (Matras 2009) and indeed by the present volume itself.

Lastly, one can mention the center-stage treatment of language contact accorded in handbooks of historical linguistics, such as McMahon (1994), McColl-Millar (2007) and Campbell (2004).

2 Generalizations Concerning Contact

It would seem that language contact always induces change. History does not provide instances of speech communities which adjoined one another, still less which intermingled, and where the languages of each community remained unaffected by the contact.⁹ However, there may well be a difference in the degree to which languages in contact influence each other, that is a cline of contact is often observable, indeed to the extent that the influence is almost totally unidirectional. Furthermore, influence may vary by level of language and depend on the nature of the contact, especially on whether bilingualism exists or not and to what degree and for what duration (see the discussion in Muysken, this volume).

Internal versus external reasons

It is scholarly practice to distinguish between internal and external reasons for language change (Hickey 2002b). Internal change is that which occurs within a speech community, generally among monolingual speakers, and external change is that which is induced by contact with speakers of a different language.

Opinions are divided on when to assume contact as the source of change. Some authors insist on the primacy of internal factors (e.g. Lass & Wright 1986) and so favor these when the scales of probability are not biased in either an internal or external direction for any instance of change. Other scholars view external reasons more favorably (Vennemann 2001, 2002b, this volume) while still others would like to see a less dichotomous view of internal versus external factors in change (Dorian 1993; Jones & Esch, 2002). The role of contact in the diversification of languages is also a theme in the seminal monograph by Johanna Nichols (1992), a theme which is taken up in her contribution to the present volume.

Substrate and superstrate

A lot of attention has been paid in the literature to the relative social status of two languages in contact situations. Two established terms are used to label the language with less status and that with more, namely, “substrate” and “superstrate” respectively. The superstrate is regarded as having, or having had, more prestige in the society in which it is spoken, though just precisely what “prestige” refers to is something which linguists like James Milroy have questioned. Nonetheless, there would seem to be a valid sense in which one of two languages has, or had, more power in a contact situation. Asymmetrical levels of power in a contact situation play a definite role in the results of contact.

Relative status and direction of influence

The standard wisdom has traditionally been that the language with more status influences that with less, i.e. borrowing is from the superstrate by the substrate. This is, however, a simplistic view of the possibilities of influence in a contact scenario. Vocabulary, as an open class with a high degree of awareness by speakers, is the primary source of borrowing from the superstrate. Again French and Latin in the history of English are standard examples.

However, if contact persists over many generations, then the substrate can have a gradual and imperceptible influence on the superstrate, leading in some cases to systemic change at a later time. This type of contact can be termed “delayed effect contact” (Hickey 2001) and may well be the source of syntactic features in English which the latter has in common with Celtic (Poussa 1990; Vennemann 2002a; Isaac 2003). This line of thought is pursued by Filppula (this volume), who presents the arguments for Celtic influence on English. In addition to structural parallels there is further evidence here. Consider the fact that in Old English *wealh* was the word for ‘foreigner’ but also for ‘Celt’. The word came to be used in the sense of ‘servant, slave’ (cf. *wielen* ‘female slave, servant’ with the same root, Holthausen 1974: 393), which would appear to be an indication of the status of the Celts vis à vis the Germanic settlers.¹⁰ Not only that, the meaning of ‘servant’ implies that the Germanic settlers put the subjugated Celts to work for them; this in turn meant that there would have been considerable face-to-face contact between Celts and Germanic settlers, in particular between the children of both groups. As the latter context was one of first language acquisition it provided an osmotic interface for structural features of Celtic to diffuse into Old English. Given that written Old English was dominated by the West Saxon standard, it is only in the Middle English period that the syntactic influence of Celtic becomes apparent in the written record, e.g. in the appearance of possessive pronouns in cases of inalienable possession.

Where does it start? The locus of contact

It is a convenient shorthand to claim, for example, that language A borrowed from language B. However, this is already an abstraction as the appearance of borrowings in a speech community can only be the result of actions by individual members of this community. If one puts aside cases of “cultural” borrowings, e.g. from Latin or Greek into later European languages or from English into other modern languages, then it is probably true that the borrowing of “systemic” material – inflections, grammatical forms, sentence structures – can only occur via bilinguals. This view has a considerable tradition. Weinreich (1953) saw the true locus of contact-induced change in the bilingual individual who moves between two linguistic systems. Some scholars go further and consider bilinguals as having a single system, e.g. Matras (this volume) who contends that bilinguals “do not, in fact, organize their communication in the form of two ‘languages’ or ‘linguistic systems’.” The awareness of linguistic systems on the

part of speakers is a difficult issue to resolve. It may well be that in prehistory and in nonliterate societies today the awareness of the separateness of languages was/is less than in present-day literate societies. If one of the languages a bilingual uses is the sole language of a country then the bilingual's awareness of switching between languages increases. Matras (this volume) maintains that bilinguals "operate on the basis of established associations between a subset of structures and a set of interaction contexts." The communicative competence of the bilingual then includes making the appropriate choices of structures for communication in given contexts. Whatever the degree of awareness by bilinguals of the separateness of their linguistic (sub)systems, the presence of competence in two languages fulfils the precondition for the adoption of material from one language into another. The next, and crucial, question is how borrowings, made on an individual level, spread throughout a community and are accepted by it. This step is essential for borrowings/items of transfer to become part of a language/variety as a whole and hence be passed on to later generations as established features. This issue will be addressed in Chapter 7 "Contact and Language Shift" below.

What can be attributed to language contact?

The current volume is dedicated to analyses of language contact, the situations in which it is or was to be found, and the results it engenders or has engendered. This focus should not imply a neglect of changes, indeed types of change, which are not due to language contact. Consider for instance, reanalysis by language learners. A specific instance of this is provided in the prehistory of Irish. The precursors of all the Celtic languages inherited complex suffixal inflections from still earlier stages of Indo-European when these were central to morphology. Some time before the Celtic languages appeared in writing (in the first centuries BC) the languages changed their typology. They began to abandon suffixal inflections as a means of indicating grammatical categories and adopted a new system whereby these categories were indicated by changes to the initial segments of lexical words, so-called initial mutation. This typological shift came about by children reanalyzing phonetic changes at the beginnings of words (external sandhi) as having systemic status (for a fuller discussion, see Hickey 1995c, 2003a). This is an entirely language-internal change, though the original trigger for the phonetic changes, which were later reanalyzed, may have been due to contact.

Pushing the question back

Contact treatments tend to push the question of origin back a step but do not necessarily explain how a phenomenon arose in the first place. For instance, if one believes that the VSO word order of Insular Celtic (Eska, this volume) is due to contact with a Semitic language (Pokorny 1949) present in the British Isles before the arrival of the Celts, one still has not accounted for the rise of VSO in the source language.¹¹ Thus contact differs from explanatory models of language in that it offers more or less plausible accounts for the appearance of linguistic

features. However, the explanation of contact mechanisms and speaker strategies in contact situations can indeed have explanatory value.

The history of contact phenomena

It can be salutary to bear the attested history of contact phenomena in mind. The paths of contact may be multiplex and varied. Take, for instance, the immediate perfective of Irish English which is (rightly) regarded as a calque on Irish.

- (1) *Tá sé tar éis an ghloine a briseadh.*
[is he after the glass COMP break-NONFINITE]
'He is after breaking the glass.'

Both the Irish and the Irish English structure have gone through historical developments while in contact. Originally, the structure could be used in both Irish and Irish English with future, i.e. prospective, reference and it is attested from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in this sense. However in both languages, the prospective use declined and an exclusively past, i.e. retrospective, use came to the fore, gradually replacing the former one in the latter half of the nineteenth century (McCafferty 2004).

Contact in hindsight

If centuries lie between the period of contact and the present it may be difficult to reconstruct the social circumstances of the contact. However, the nature of the contact can often be gleaned from the results it engendered. To illustrate this consider lexical changes in the period immediately after the coming of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland in the late twelfth century. Many loans from Anglo-Norman appear and not a few of them are "core" vocabulary items like the words for 'boy' (*garsún* < Anglo-Norman *garçon*) and 'child' (*páiste* < Anglo-Norman *page*). Given that Anglo-Norman was the superstrate language in the late Middle Irish period, why should the Irish have borrowed such "noncultural" core items as 'boy' or 'child'? The answer would seem to lie in the manner in which these words entered Irish. Assume that they were not borrowed by the native Irish directly, but rather that the Anglo-Normans used them in their variety of Irish. It is a historical fact that the Anglo-Normans lived in the countryside among the Irish and gradually shifted to their language. During the shift period an intermediate variety was spoken by the Anglo-Normans in which they used words from their own language like *garçon* and *page*. Because of the power the Anglo-Normans had in Irish society, the native Irish adopted core vocabulary items of this Anglo-Norman variety of Irish and, for example, the negation structure *Níl puinn Gaeilge agam* [is-not point Irish at-me] 'I cannot speak Irish', which shows the negative use of French *point* (Rockel 1989: 59). The likelihood of this scenario is strengthened by considering that the Anglo-Norman loans in Irish did not necessarily replace the native Irish words. For instance, the Anglo-Norman loan *páiste* exists side by