

MODELLING LANGUAGE CONTACT: LINGUISTIC DATA AND INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

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This workshop will bring together scholars who have studied specific examples of language contact, scholars who have provided general typologies of language contact from a linguistic point of view, and scholars who are trying to systematize language contact by designing interdisciplinary models. The aim is to enrich the vision of this complex phenomenon by breaking traditional discrete classifications of disciplines.

Language contact has been a hot issue in linguistics above all since Weinreich published his *Languages in Contact* in 1953, because it represents one of the most common environments of language variation and change. Likewise, it is the scenario for the study of bilingualism, language competition and shift and the emergence of new linguistic varieties, including creoles and code-switching varieties (cf., to cite just a few, Hamers & Blanc 1989, Romaine 1989, Fishman 1991, Grenoble & Whaley 1998, 2006, Nettle & Romaine 2000, Bradley & Bradley 2002, Mufwene 2004, 2008). Since the emergence of the study of language contact, myriads of case-studies have been published on specific situations all over the globe.

The exact role of the factors involved in any of these phenomena has always been of high interest among scholars who would like to provide general typologies and / or models that would allow for individual analyses of specific situations. Thus, general characterizations and classifications of bilingualism have been proposed, among others, by Appel & Muysken (1987), Hamers & Blanc (1989), and Romaine (1989). The emergence of creoles and the existence or not of “killer languages” have been intensely addressed by scholars such as Mufwene (2001, 2008). The emergence and structure of code-switching varieties has been carefully studied by Auer (1999), who offers a typology of bilingual speech in which he makes a distinction between code-switching, language mixing and fused lects, and by Muysken (2000), who provides a typology of code-mixing, based on insertion, alternation and congruent lexicalization. Both approaches have proved highly valuable as a tool of analysis of utterly different situations (cf. Pena-Díaz 2006, Deuchar *et al.* 2007). Language competition and shift has also undergone different attempts to be modelled, usually with the aim of finding a way of preserving or revitalizing endangered languages (cf., for example, Grenoble & Whaley 1998).

In addition to these (socio-)linguistic approaches to language contact, which are on occasions combined with sociological or psycholinguistic aspects, recently scholars from other disciplines have begun to design models of language contact that attempt to account for the major factors that are involved in language maintenance. Thus, Abrams & Strogatz (2003), two engineers, provided the first non-linguistic model of language competition, which was based on the effects of prestige and density of speakers of each of the languages in the community. At about the same time, other research groups offered other models, including factors such as bilingualism or the transmission of languages from generation to generation (cf. Wang & Minett 2005, Minett & Wang 2008), and combining these models with complex networks in which the interaction among agents represents a crucial factor (cf. Castelló *et al.* 2007).

The contribution of all these multi-disciplinary works to the understanding and systematization of language contact is highly valuable, however, the forums in which

scholars from the different disciplines meet do not usually allow for a clear inter-disciplinarity in which members from all fields can trade knowledge and opinions about ongoing work. It is within this context that we propose a workshop that can serve as a meeting point for researchers that try to approach the systematization of language contact from different perspectives. Thus, the questions we would like to answer in this workshop are:

- a) In what way can case-studies contribute to the general modelling of language contact?
- b) Is it really possible to systematize multilingual human behaviour, or the variables involved are too many to be seized in a model?
- c) What are the basic steps to be followed in the search for a model of language contact?
- d) Do existing models exclude one another or are they complementary?
- e) Is there any possibility that contact linguistics can profit from other disciplines, at the same time that other disciplines profit from contact linguistics?
- f) In what way does the topological structure of a community affect language maintenance in a situation of language contact?
- g) What is the role of bilingualism in language maintenance or death?
- h) Have factors such as pride and prestige been overestimated in the literature on language maintenance?

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