

## **Typology, Language Contact, and Corpus Languages: a Unifying Approach**

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Research in language contact and linguistic typology has made tremendous progress since the seminal and foundational works of Weinreich (1953) and Greenberg (1966). In recent years in particular, these two fields have been explored to ever greater extents, both in PhD theses (e.g. Bianconi 2019; Bisiada 2014; Fendel 2018; Meyer 2017) as well as in handbooks (e.g. Aikhenvald and Dixon 2001, 2007; Hickey 2010, 2017; Matras 2020). Nevertheless, the intersection of these fields – language contact studies and typology – is not yet as advanced as the individual disciplines themselves; in particular, the diachronic perspective of the typology of changes induced by language contact deserves more attention.

Endeavours in this direction are, however, often hindered by the nature of the data. Historical languages generally present certain limitations: a finite corpus consisting of texts from particular registers or genres only; an often imperfect understanding of the social, historical, and political details of the time period in question; and the lack or imparity of corpora for potential contact languages. Together with the tenet that ‘(almost) anything goes in language contact’ (cf. Thomason 2003:709), this combination of factors makes any judgement whether a particular change is due to language contact or not very difficult. It is only on the basis of comparative data and typological insights that such judgements can be corroborated.

In practice, this means that language contact studies are in need of a freely-accessible database such as WALS (Dryer and Haspelmath 2011) provides for typology more generally. Therein, the various types of contact-induced change observed in the world’s languages would be recorded, categorised, mapped, and succinctly analysed. Projects of this sort with a more specific scope have already been conducted (e.g. Seifart 2013, 2015) as have typological studies into specific kinds of contact-induced change (e.g. Meyer 2019).

In keeping with the subject and goals of this workshop, the present paper seeks to illustrate the ideas of the project briefly outlined above at the example of contact-induced changes in morphosyntactic alignment, particularly of corpus languages. The changes will be categorised (e.g. ERG-ABS → NOM-ACC), mapped, and summarily analysed as regards tendencies of borrowing, direction and circumstances of change, etc. Next to linguistic data, the description and the mapping system will take into account extralinguistic factors such as length and/or intensity of contact as well as socio-historical circumstances (e.g. substrate / superstrate influence). The metanalysis of these data provides valuable, data-based insights into which kind of change is more or less likely (e.g. the creation of split systems rather than wholesale change; cf. Dixon 1994:203–206) and in what kind of setting. It further highlights the difficulties any such study might encounter, for instance multiple, incomplete, or marginal alignment changes.

The paper hopes to show that this kind of typological overview – essentially a combination of linguistic, geographic, and historical data, metanalysed for tendencies and clearly referenced – will be a useful tool for linguists working in typology, language contact studies and historical linguistics. In view of the limitations inherent in the study of corpus languages, such an overview, esp. when expanded beyond a pilot study such as this one, would provide the typological and comparative background to facilitate a host of other research projects in linguistics.

**Keywords:** language contact, morphosyntactic change, typology, corpus linguistics

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