Language contact effects on locus of marking: A multivariate typological approach

Kaius Sinnemäki (University of Helsinki) & Noora Ahola (University of Helsinki)

In language contact research an important aim is to analyse if social contact between the language of interest (called here the Focus language) and a contact language (called here the Neighbour language) has resulted in linguistic changes and if yes, to what kind. To plausibly argue for contact effects some control data is needed. In the best-case scenario data would be available on the Focus language prior to contact, but such historical data is possible for a minority of the world's languages only. An alternative is to use the comparative method to reconstruct a plausible ancestral state for the Focus language. Reconstructing ancestral states is feasible when aiming to study a few languages, but the workload soon becomes unmanageable if aiming to draw more general conclusions about language contact in the world's languages, since many more ancestral states would need to be reconstructed.

Recently Di Garbo et al. (2021) have proposed a new sampling method for detecting language contact effects in large-scale typological research. They propose that what is minimally needed to make inferences about contact effects is one control language outside the Focus and the Neighbour contact zone. In this presentation, we apply this approach to locus of marking in adnominal possession. Locus of marking in this domain is about whether the syntactic dependency between the possessor and the possessee is morphologically marked on the possessor, the possessee, both, or neither (Nichols 1992). In English, the possessor is morphologically marked as in *his mother*; in Indonesian (1) it is the possessee:

(1) *ibu-nya*   *Suparjo*
     mother-3SG.POSS   Suparjo
     'Suparjo's mother' (Sneddon 1996: 146)

Our aim is to evaluate to what extent the choice of the control language may affect inferences about contact effects. We discuss data from two contact settings. One setting involves Zazaki (West Iranian) in contact with Turkish (Turkic) in Eastern Turkey and the other involves Alorese (Malayo-Polynesian) in contact with Adang (Timor-Alor-Pantar) in East Indonesia.

Zazaki (Todd 2008; Paul 2010) uses double marking in possessive noun phrases just as the contact language Turkish (Kornfilt 1997). However, most other West Iranian languages have double marking only as a minor pattern among different loci (e.g., Bashkardi; Korn 2017) or not at all, using instead head or dependent marking depending on the context (e.g., Western Balochi; Jahani & Korn 2010). Thus, regardless of which language was selected as the control language, the main contact effect in Zazaki would seem to be the restructuring and simplification from several alternative patterns down to one dominating pattern.

Alorese uses head marking and zero marking, partly conditioned by alienability (Klamer 2011). Adang uses head, dependent, and double marking, depending on the context, and partly conditioned by alienability (Haan 2001). Some languages related to Alorese and spoken in relative geographic proximity also employ the alienability distinction (e.g., Sika), while others spoken geographically further away and/or deeper inland do not use it (e.g., Kambera, Manggarai; Fricke 2019). It would seem that the choice of the control language would not make a difference to inferences about contact regarding alienability as long as it is carefully selected. Based on our analyses we argue that the method proposed by Di Garbo et al. (2021) can be productively applied to locus of marking in adnominal possessives and that the inferences about contact effects are largely reliable as long as proper criteria are used in the selection of the control language.

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