Phonological cover-up:
Contact-induced undoing of sound changes in
Sri Lanka Malay

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1. no change
2. internal change
3. contact-induced change
4. contact-induced non-change
5. contact-induced reversal

No change

time

language

Internal change

time

language

Contact-induced change

time

language

contact language

Contact-induced non-change

time

language

contact language

distant relative

Contact-induced reversal: cover-up

time

language

Borrowing event   phonological integration   renewed contact   cover-up

contact language

absence of contact
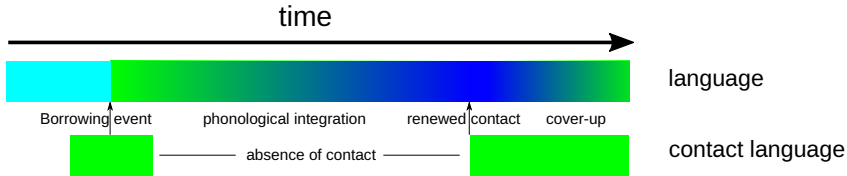
⟩ A loandword (green) is borrowed
⟩ becomes phonologically integrated (blue) when contact ceases
⟩ upon renewed contact, the phonological integration is undone

The setting

Nordhoff

The setting

〉 Either side of the Bay of Bengal

〉 In the West: South Asian Sprachbund (Masica 1976)

〉 In the East: the Malysian peninsula and archipelago

〉 long standing trade relations

〉 precolonial language contact

〉 loanwords from

　〉 Hindi (Hamilton 1919)
　〉 Tamil, from at least 900 CE (Hoogervorst 2015)
　〉 other Indian languages (Jones 2007)

Phonological comparison

Indian sprachbund	Malay world

two coronal places of articulation
   dental
   retroflex
	one coronal place of articulation

vowel length	no distinctive vowel length
geminate consonants	no distinctive consonant length
aspirated consonants	no aspirated consonants

Indian loanwords in Malay

1000+ years ago

Indian loanwords in Malay

〉 predictably lose their Indian features
〉 phonological integration
   〉 *kathā → kata* 'word'
      〉 loss of aspiration, vowel length
   〉 *bhāṣā → bahasa* 'language'
      〉 split of aspiration, vowel length, fronting of retroflex sibilant
   〉 *kaṭṭil → katil* 'bed'
      〉 degemination, fronting of retroflex stop
〉 Hamilton (1919); Jones (2007); Hoogervorst (2015)

Sri Lanka Malay

〉 language of the ethnic group of Malays in Sri Lanka
  〉 46,000 Malays in Sri Lanka (0.3% of the population)
〉 brought between roughly 1650 and 1850
  〉 colonial powers of the Dutch and the British
  〉 exiles
  〉 mercenaries
  〉 slaves
〉 contact languages Sinhala (Indo-Aryan) and Tamil (Dravidian)
〉 important language change with phenomenal speed ensues
〉 Hussainmiya (1990); Nordhoff (2009; 2012)

Migration of Malays to Sri Lanka

300 years ago

Nordhoff

Language contact: new features

- 〉 syntax
    - 〉 SOV word order
    - 〉 Postpositions
- 〉 morphology
    - 〉 Case clitics
    - 〉 participles, infinitives
- 〉 phonology
    - 〉 dental/retroflex distinction
    - 〉 vowel length/consonant length
        - 〉 depends on analysis, one is sufficient to account for the other
    - 〉 prenasalized consonants
- 〉 all of this is about as far away from a well behaved Malay variety as it gets
- 〉 Nordhoff (2012)

Metrical structure of the SLM word

〉 most words have two syllables
〉 the penultimate syllable typically either has a coda (CVC) or a long vowel (CVV)
〉 well-formed words
  〉 CVV.CV
  〉 CVC.CV
〉 generalization
  〉 CVX.CV
〉 analysis: extrametrical final syllable with a bimoraic foot constraint
  〉 $C(V_{\mu}X_{\mu}).<CV>$
  〉 Nordhoff (2009)

Regular sound change: Vowel lengthening/gemination

〉 *nasi → naasi* 'rice'

〉 *cuci → cuuci* 'wash'

〉 *sopi → soopi* 'liquor'

〉 *mati → maati* 'to die'

〉 *derapa → draapa* 'how much'

〉 *bəsar → bìssar* 'big'

Exceptions to regular sound change

〉 expected
  〉 *kapal* → **kaapal* 'ship'
  〉 *topi* → **toopi* 'hat'
  〉 *katil* → **kaatil* 'bed'

〉 found
  〉 *kapal* → *kappal*
  〉 *topi* → *toppi*
  〉 *katil* → *kaṭṭil*

No phonological cues

〉 *topi/sopi* would be expected to behave alike

〉 *drapa/kapal* would be expected to behave alike

〉 *katil/mati* would be expected to behave alike

〉 phonological conditioning unlikely

〉 lexical specification

　　〉 reason: cognates in contact languages

　　〉 Tamil *toppi*, *kappal*, *kaṭṭil*

　　〉 Sinhala *toppiya* 'hat (sg)', *toppi* 'hat (pl)'

〉 **"phonological cover-up"**

Cover-up beyond vowel lengthening

〉 The preceding examples have been chosen because they are easy to grasp

〉 Could be explained as a straight new act of borrowing

〉 unlikely for high frequency concepts like BOAT, HAT, and BED

　〉 no evidence for lexical gaps or functional differentiation

　〉 one would have to argue that the word *kapal* 'boat' was temporarily lost on an island nation surrounded by sea, only to be subsequently reborrowed as *kappal*

〉 other, more involved domains of cover-up to be discussed now:

　2. syllabification of ŋ

　3. heterosyllabic NC̣ clusters

　4. re-fronting of voiced coronal stop

Syllabification of ŋ

⟩ Malay varieties can have syllable initial ŋ

⟩ So can Sri Lanka Malay

   ⟩ *iŋat* → *iiŋat* 'to think'

⟩ based on this, we would expect *siŋa* → **siiŋa* 'lion'

⟩ but we get

   ⟩ *si.ŋa* → *siŋ.ga*

⟩ explanation: Sinhala *siŋ.ha.yaa* and Tamil *ciŋ.gam* with a velar nasal coda in the first syllable

   ⟩ Sanskrit *siṃ.há*, Hindi *siṅgh*

   ↓

   ⟩ resyllabification to *si.ŋa* in Malay

   ↓

   ⟩ "deresyllabfication"/cover-up in SLM to *siŋ.ga*

NC̥ clusters

⟩ NC̥ clusters with a voiced stop predictably have tautosyllabic rendering in SLM (V.NC̥V)
  - ⟩ *gam.bar* → *gaa.mbar* 'picture'
  - ⟩ *ban.jir* → *baa.njir* 'flooding'
⟩ exception
  - ⟩ *sam.bal* → **saa.mbal* 'spicy dish'
  - ⟩ *sam.bal* → *sam.bal*
  - ⟩ *kan.ji* → **kaa.nji* 'rice gruel'
  - ⟩ *kan.ji* → *kan.ji*
⟩ explanation
  - ⟩ Tamil *cam.bal*, Sinhala *sam.bol* have heterosyllabic clusters
  - ⟩ Tamil *kañ.ci*, has a heterosyllabic cluster
    - ⟩ NB: all Tamil NC clusters are always heterosyllabic, but Sinhala has words with tautosyllabic clusters.
  - ⟩ rest of the phonology is untouched

Fronting of d

〉 alveolar d becomes (post)alveolar d in Sri Lanka Malay
   〉 *lada* → *laada* 'pepper'
〉 exception:
   〉 *kalde* → *kalde 'donkey'
   〉 *kalde* → *kalḏe*
〉 explanation:
   〉 Tamil *kaluḏai* has a dental ḏ as well
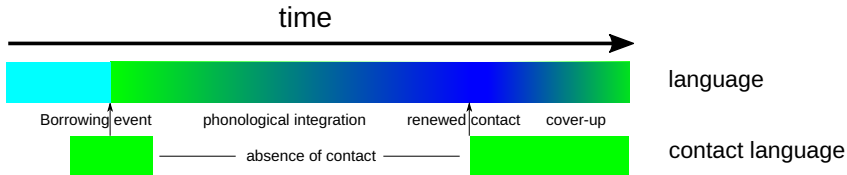   〉 rest of the phonology is untouched

Metalinguistic awareness

⟩ speakers are highly multilingual and are also able to identify cognates

⟩ in order to verify my hearing of length, I regularly use Sinhala script

⟩ would the word for 'earth' be   (short vowel) or   (long vowel)?

   ⟩ "No, you can't write like that, it has to be   " (bhūmi, aspirated bh, long vowel) (Sinhala has a cognate word written <bhuuma>, pronounced [buumə])

Metalinguistic awareness

〉 Speaker has internalized Sinhala prescriptivism regarding aspirate graphemes for certain words of Sanskrit etymology
  〉 NB: In distinction to many other IA languages, Sinhala has no contrast in aspiration

〉 That prescriptivism is transposed to Sri Lanka Malay as well
  〉 There is even less reason to use a grapheme for an aspirated consonant in Sri Lanka Malay

〉 This anecdote might not be the best evidence, but it shows that speakers transpose "etymological well-behavedness" from one language to another.

〉 similar social/cognitive processes might be at work during cover-up

Counter examples

〉 There are a couple of loanwords which escape cover-up
〉 *raasa* 'tasty'
  〉 *rasa* → *raasa*
  〉 *rasa* → *rasa
  〉 even if Sinhala has *rasa*
〉 but *rasa* is not a well-formed word
  〉 extrametricality of the final syllable (*ra.<sa>*)
  〉 the remainder (*ra*) is not sufficient to form a bimoraic foot
  〉 phonological well-formedness seems to trump cover-up

Summary

⟩ I have shown four different cases of contact-induced reversal in the domain of phonology

  1. regemination (*kappal*)
  2. de-resyllabification of ŋ (*siŋ.ga*)
  3. tautosyllabic NC̦ clusters (*gaa.mbar*)
  4. re-fronting of voiced coronal stop (*kald̪e*)

⟩ New undescribed type of language change

⟩ Evidence for speakers' metalinguistic awareness

⟩ "Don't say X, that would sound silly, say Y like in the other languages"

  ⟩ but only if Y is phonologically well-formed

⟩ "conscious" language change

⟩ What about other Sprachbund phenomena?

⟩ Sinhala lost certain retroflex phonemes several times during its history

⟩ German never created (and never lost) retroflexion

⟩⟩ true for most of Standard Average European

⟩ Is "inertia" in Sprachbunds (eg retroflexion in South Asia) also some kind of cover-up?

⟩⟩ Languages might develop a new feature, but are "pulled back into the areal norm" by multilingual speakers who notice the deviation

Thank you

time

language

Borrowing event   phonological integration   renewed contact   cover-up

contact language

absence of contact

terima kasih $\rightarrow$ (t̪ri$_\mu$i$_\mu$)<ma> (ka$_\mu$a$_\mu$)<si> 'thank you'

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Thank you

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