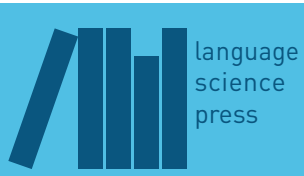
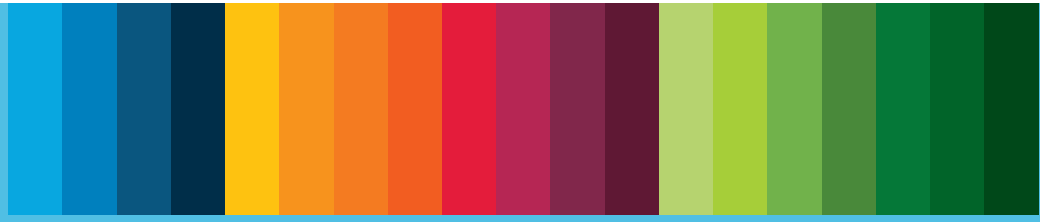




Phonological cover-up:
Contact-induced undoing of sound changes in Sri Lanka Malay

Sebastian Nordhoff

2022-08-02, ICHL 25, University of Oxford
Language Science Press

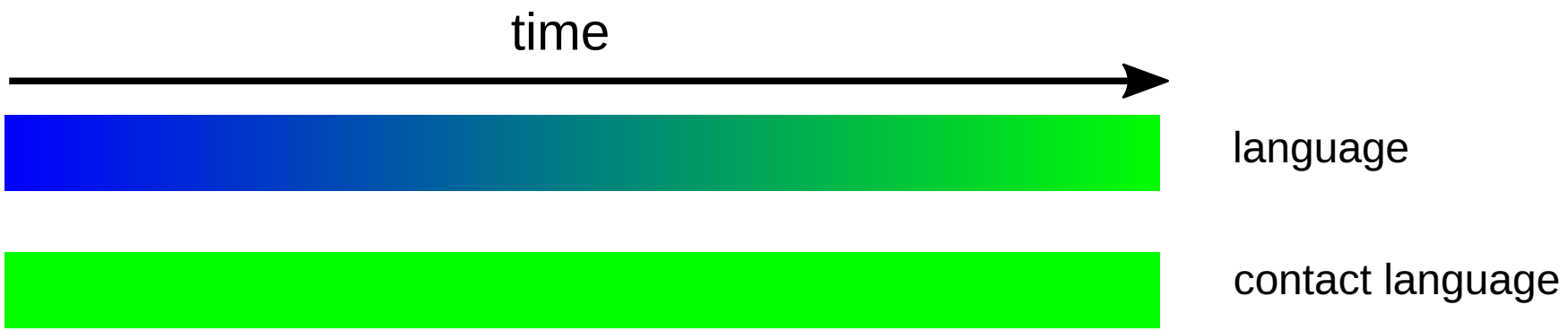
A typology of language change

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

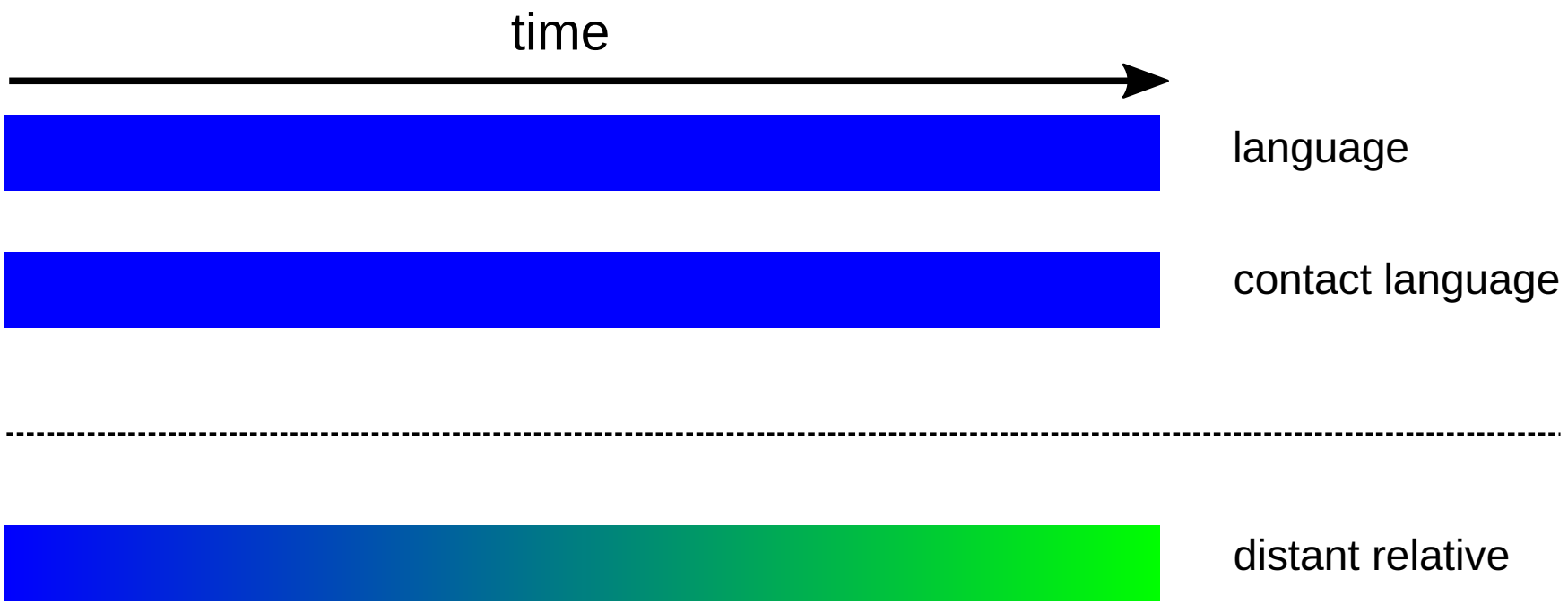
No change

Internal change

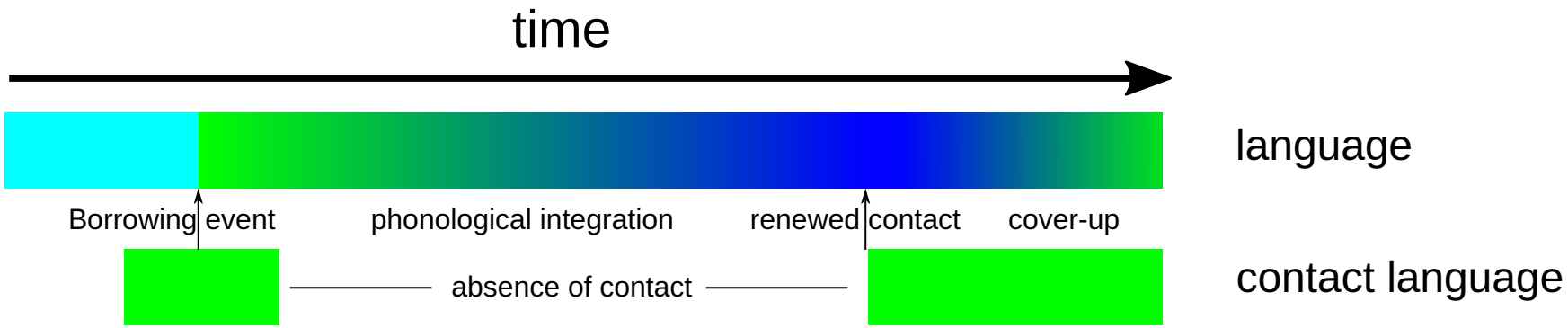
Contact-induced change



Contact-induced non-change

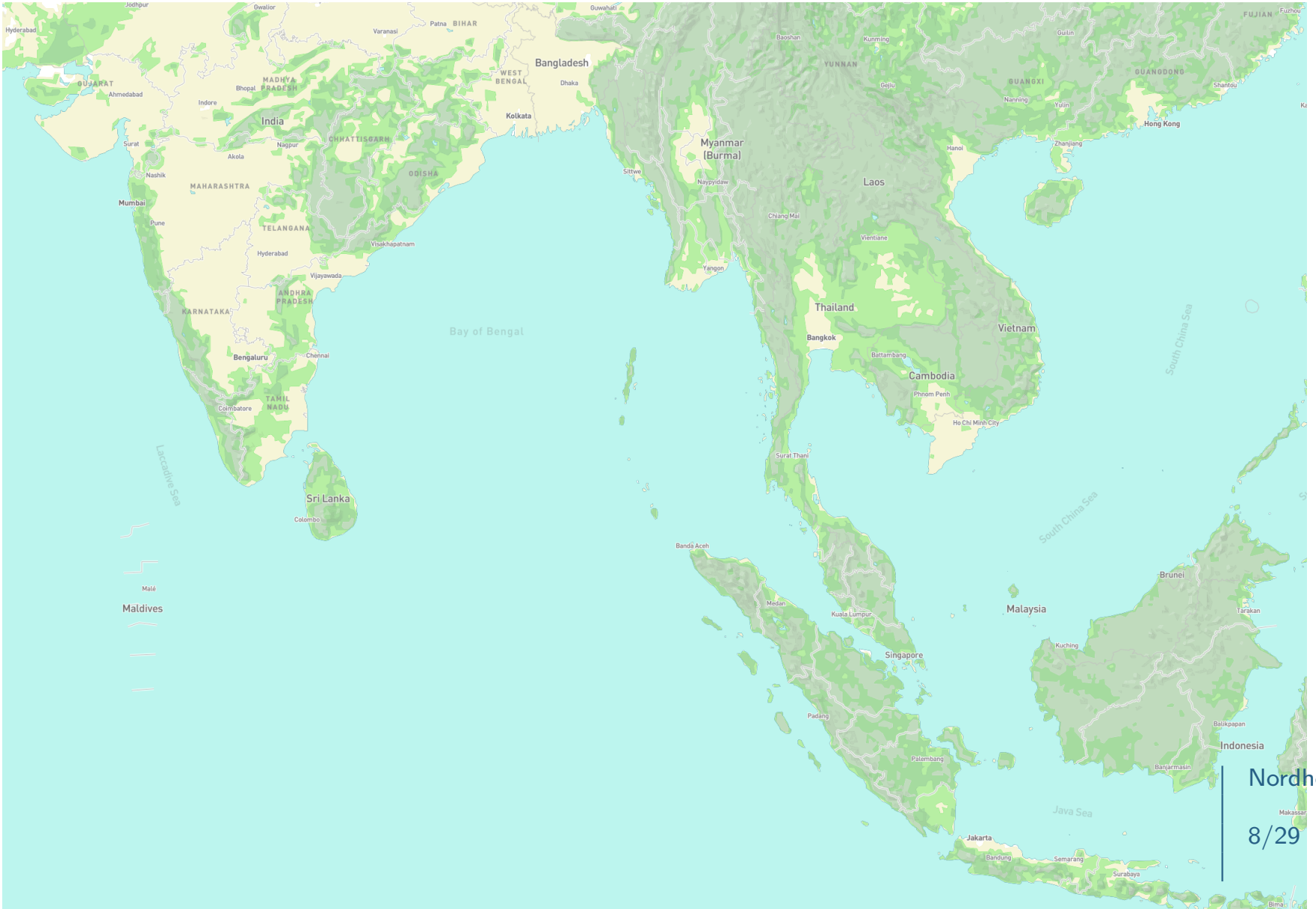


Contact-induced reversal: cover-up



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

The setting


Jodhpur
Gwalior
Hyderabad
Varanasi
Patna
BIHAR
Guwahati
FUJIAN
Fuzhou
Baoshan
Kunming
Guilin
YUNNAN
Bangladesh
WEST BENGAL
Dhaka
GUANGDONG
GUJARAT
Ahmedabad
Bhopal
MADHYA PRADESH
Indore
Gejiu
GUANGXI
Nanning
Yulin
Shantou
India
Kolkata
Hong Kong
Surat
Nagpur
CHHATTISGARH
Myanmar (Burma)
Hanoi
Akola
Zhanjiang
Nashik
ODISHA
Sittwe
Laos
MAHARASHTRA
Naypyidaw
Mumbai
Chiang Mai
Pune
TELANGANA
Vientiane
Visakhapatnam
Hyderabad
Yangon
Vijayawada
ANDHRA PRADESH
Thailand
KARNATAKA
Bay of Bengal
Vietnam
Bangkok
Bengaluru
Chennai
Battambang
Cambodia
South China Sea
TAMIL NADU
Phnom Penh
Coimbatore
Ho Chi Minh City
Surat Thani
Laccadive Sea
Sri Lanka
Colombo
South China Sea
Banda Aceh
Brunei
Malé
Medan
Malaysia
Maldives
Kuala Lumpur
Tarakan
Singapore
Kuching
Padang
Balikpapan
Indonesia
Palembang
Banjarmasin
Java Sea
Makassar
Jakarta
Bandung
Semarang
Surabaya
Bima

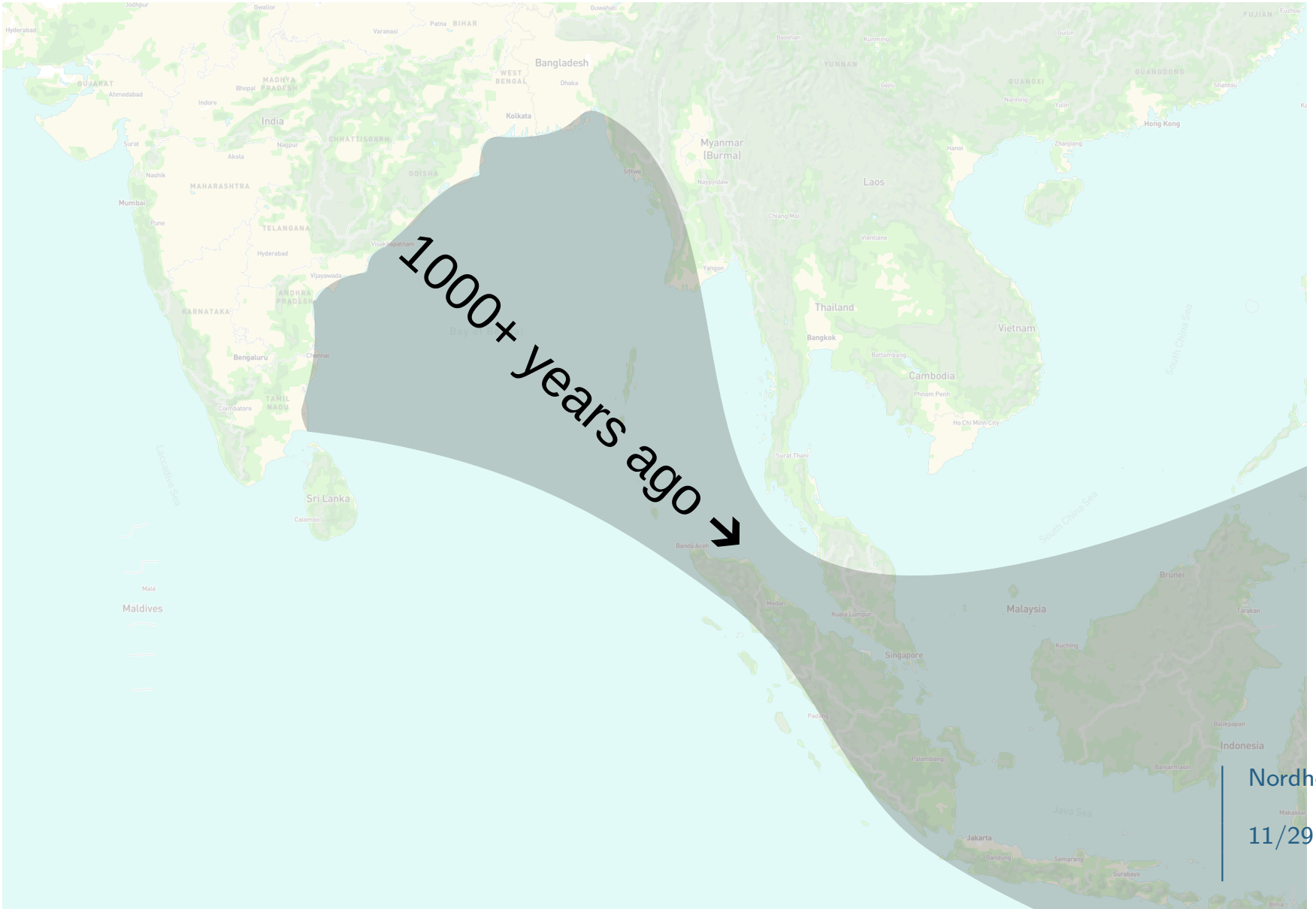
The setting

- Either side of the Bay of Bengal
- In the West: South Asian Sprachbund (**Masica1976**)
- 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 (**Jones2007**)

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



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
- **Jones2007**; Hamilton (1919); 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
- **Hussainmiya1990**; **Nordhoff2009**; **Nordhoff2012ed**

Migration of Malays to Sri Lanka

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
- **Nordhoff2012ed**

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>
  - **Nordhoff2009**

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 NC̬ 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*

NC̬ clusters

- NC̬ clusters with a voiced stop predictably have tautosyllabic rendering in SLM (V.NC̬V)
  - *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
  - *ade* → *aade* ‘younger sibling’
- exception:
  - *kalde* → **kalde* ‘donkey’
  - *kalde* → *kal̪de*
- explanation:
  - Tamil *kaḷuḍai* has a dental ḍ 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

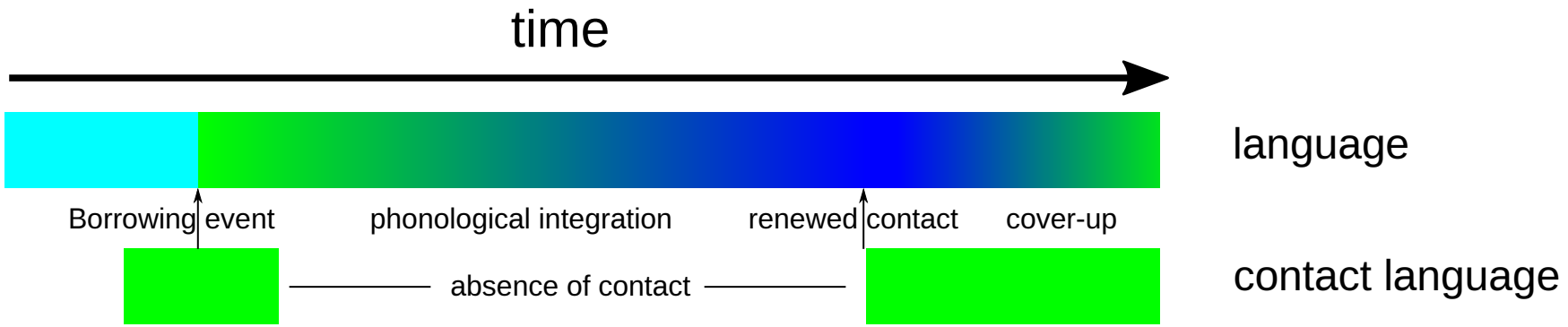
Summary

- 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 NC̬ clusters (*gaa.mbar*)
  4. re-fronting of voiced coronal stop (*kal̪de*)
- 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

Outlook

- 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



terima kasih $\rightarrow$ (t̲ri$_\mu$i$_\mu$)<ma> (ka$_\mu$a$_\mu$)<si>

'thank you'

Thank you


Hamilton, A. W. 1919. Hindustani, Tamil, Sanskrit and other loan words in Malay. *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 80. 29–38.


Hoogervorst, Tom G. 2015. Tracing the linguistic crossroads between Malay and Tamil. *Wacana* 16(2). 249–283.