Reassessing Contact Linguistics
Signposts Towards an Explanatory Approach to Language Contact

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Abstract:

This contribution aims to clarify some fundamental issues concerning contact linguistics, by (a) defining language contact, (b) distinguishing between investigation levels and (c) presenting the methodology of this particular explanatory approach to the analysis of contact linguistics phenomena. The perspective, from which I address the questions above, is largely atypical within the field of contact linguistics. It starts from the well-known distinction between E- and I-language introduced by Chomsky (1986) and draws up a linguistic model of the internal principles and rules (I-Grammar) that govern the combination and recombination of abstract linguistic features from different languages in both the mind of the bilingual person and the grammatical system of a bilingual community. I present data from Cimbrian, a German-based minority language still spoken in Northern Italy, which is a key-study for contact linguistics, since it has been evolving under pressure from Italian and Romance dialects for many centuries. The contact phenomena are analyzed both from the perspective of the whole grammatical system, which is shared by the entire population of speakers, and from the perspective of the grammatical innovations so far made by very few speakers, which may, nevertheless, represent possible future developments of the Cimbrian grammar.

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1. Introduction[1]

Contact linguistics is currently one of the most dynamic linguistic research fields, attracting numerous scholars with many different perspectives: variationist sociolinguistics, typology, Creole linguistics, language acquisition, historical linguistics, psycholinguistics, among others. In his "Language contact and the origins of the Germanic Languages", PETER SCHRIJVER (2014: 1) rightly attests "[i]n recent decades, a wealth of scholarly literature about language contact". And RAYMOND HICKEY (2013: 1), introducing "The Handbook of Language Contact", observes that "the most cursory glance at linguistic publications in the past few decades reveals a wealth of literature on language contact".

Modern contact linguistics is generally said to have originated in the seminal work of WEINREICH (1953) which, according to SCHRIJVER (2014: 1), restored language contact "to a position of central importance in the linguistic enterprise in general". However, WEINREICH's work (1953) is more a research program than an elaborated theory for modern contact linguistics and it was only with THOMASON / KAUFMAN (1988) that a framework for contact studies really developed. Since then, language contact has been increasingly argued as one of, if not the, most important trigger(s) of language change, by which virtually all diachronic variation can be explained (see HICKEY 2013: 1,

THOMASON 2013: 33, SCHRIJVER 2014: 1).

Taking the idea of the centrality of language contact seriously, SCHREIER / HUNDT (2013: 17), for instance, claim it always to have been the main driver of change in English. English historical linguistics has treated it as marginal; now "[i]t is time to turn the tables and redress the imbalance, because at the end of the day,

English has never been anything else but a contact language" (SCHREIER / HUNDT 2013: 17).

The vaunting of language contact as the natural and self-evident source of language change has, however, been criticized by some socio- and theoretical linguists. SARAH THOMASON (2013: 31), one of the most important sociolinguists of contact-induced language change, recently emphasized that "[p]rogress in contact linguistics depends [...] on recognizing the complexity of change processes – on resisting the urge to offer a single simple explanation for all types of structural change."

She also suggests that we look for both internal and external sources of language change (see THOMASON 2013: 33), remembering that the sheer complexity of influencing factors means that in many cases there can be no definitive explanation for linguistic change:

> [I]n spite of dramatic progress toward explaining linguistic changes made in recent decades by historical linguists, variationists, and experimental linguists, it remains true that we have no adequate explanation for the vast majority of all linguistic changes that have been discovered. Worse, it may reasonably be said that we have no full explanation for any linguistic change, or for the emergence and spread of any linguistic variant (THOMASON 2013: 33).

From the perspective of theoretical linguistics, ABRAHAM (2013: 16) proposes that the search for contact explanations be a strategy of last resort. Even when there is robust evidence for language contact, it should be assumed that change can only occur because the possibility of change has already been given internally. This implies that "for methodological reasons, explanations for language change should be sought first and as long as tenable on the basis of language internal options" (ABRAHAM 2013: 16). In fact, it is more likely for a language to disappear and be substituted by another than for it to change its typological system, according to ABRAHAM (2013: 22).

This disagreement about the significance of contact explanations is probably due to the heterogeneity of not only the research object, but also the questions, methods and disciplines involved and, of course, to the theoretical backgrounds and linguistic frameworks of the researchers. In the preface to the first international manual dedicated to contact linguistics (GOEBL et al. 1996a), the editors of the volume feel a duty to state that:

> [o]ur new sub-discipline of contact linguistics is still very young and has not yet developed a coherent conceptual, methodological and substantive framework of its own. The programmatic scope of the pragmatic realities of speech and language is too wide to easily fit a compact system (GOEBL et al. 1996b: XXX).

FÖLDES (2010: 134) recently reiterated this statement, pointing out that contact linguistics lacks even basic consensus on the fundamental questions of the discipline.

The present article is an attempt to clarify the following two fundamental questions, namely:

(1)   What is language contact and which levels of investigation should be kept distinct in language contact research?

(2)   What might an explanatory approach to contact linguistics look like?

I believe that answers to the above questions can be found in the data from Cimbrian, a German-based minority language still spoken in Northern Italy, presented below. Cimbrian offers an excellent case study, since it has been evolving in contact with a typologically different language, i.e. Italian (and the Romance dialects), for many centuries. The theoretical background for these analyses is the generative framework (cf. for similar attempts KING 2000, CORRIGAN 2013, and ABOH 2015); in particular, I capitalize on the well-known distinction between I-language and E-language introduced by CHOMSKY (1986) and recently revisited by RICARDO ETXEPARE from a contact linguistics perspective (at the workshop "Language Contact from an I-Language perspective", 27th – 28th October 2016). The paper is structured as follows: in section 2 I address questions (1) und (2) from a theoretical viewpoint. Then, in section 3 and section 4, I take Cimbrian as an example of how an explanatory approach to contact phenomena operates, respectively at the community and the individual level. Finally, in section 5, I present some recapitulatory reflections on questions (1) and (2), drawing on the Cimbrian case study.

2. The levels of language contact research and the aims of an explanatory approach in contact theory

MUYSKEN (2013: 267), in his discussion of "Scenarios for Language Contact" points out the discrepancy between the explanations of language change offered by historical linguists and the constraints of language change elaborated by contact specialists. He writes:

> There is a discrepancy between findings from the historical linguistic study of contact-induced language change and contemporary language contact studies. Historical linguists have found few if any constraints on contact-induced language change [...]. In contrast, language contact specialists have found that specific contemporary contact settings are constrained in various ways (MUYSKEN 2013: 267).

In a similar vein, it has been suggested that the emergence of the Germanic strong verb system is easier to explain if it is seen as a regularization of morphological processes and, therefore, the result of an internal morphological change (cf. BALDI/PAGE 2006: 2203) rather than the consequence of contact with a Semitidic superstrate (cf. VENNEMANN 2003: 568–573). In fact, although there is "compelling evidence" (BALDI/PAGE 2006: 2203) that many strong verbs with root

p have been borrowed from non-Indo-European languages and inserted into the Protogermanic lexicon, a constraint on contact-induced language change for the development of the Germanic verb system on the basis of this intensive verbal borrowing has not been proposed. For this reason, the preferred explanation remains the internal one (cf. ROBERGE 2013: 409).

In order to resolve the discrepancy between the results of historical linguistics on the one hand and contact linguistics on the other, MUYSKEN (2013: 267) proposes that the effects of language contact be studied by distinguishing four different levels of aggregation and four different time depths:

(i)   the bilingual person (0–50 years);

(ii)   the bilingual community (20–200 years);

(iii)   the geographical region (200–1000 years);

(iv)   larger world areas (deep time).

Inspired by the work of Nichols (2003), Muysken (2013: 267) captures the effects and the processes at work at every level by introducing the concept of a 'contact scenario', which he defines as "the organized fashion in which multilingual speakers, in certain social settings, deal with the various languages in their repertoire".

The main scenarios for the four levels mentioned are: at the individual level, brain connectivity; at the community (micro) level, different scenarios of specific contact; at the level of the geographical region (meso) global contact scenarios and, finally, at the level of the larger world area (macro) vague or no contact scenarios. At every main level, a variety of scenarios – more or less fine-grained – is conceivable, depending both on which languages are involved (with their own specific linguistic structures) and on a range of particular sociolinguistic factors. In fact, Muysken intends his proposal to overcome the famous conflict between social (i.e. external) and structural (i.e. internal) motives for language change (see also Lucas 2015). For our purpose, it is important to highlight the fact that he considers the first two stages (individual, community) to be distinct levels of language contact, in each of which processes and principles which are characteristic of that level hold and should be considered separately, from a methodological point of view too.

How should language contact be defined at each of the two levels? Muysken (2013: 267) suggests that in the brain connectivity scenario (at the individual stage level) psycholinguistic explanations should be prioritized; he admits, however, that this kind of approach is not suitable for the derivation of contact constraints, as "psycholinguistic evidence is often difficult to interpret in these terms [= of language contact] and equally often it is contradictory" (Muysken 2013: 267). My proposal is to draw on Chomsky's (1986) well-known distinction between I-language and E-language, which Ricardo Etxepare has recently brought into discussion within the context of contact language explanations (see Bidese 2017).

With the concept of I-language, Chomsky (1986: 22) reinterprets Jespersen's (1924) "notion of structure" as "internalized language", i.e. as the reality "of the mind of the person who knows the language, acquired by the learner, and used by the speaker-hearer." The theory about this i n d i v i d u a l and i n t e r n a l reality in the mind of the speakers is a linguistic model (I-Grammar) whose rules and principles are i n t e n s i o n a l and i d e a l i z e d. 'Intensional' means that they operate on abstract representations such as, for instance, the representation of the plural, independently of the concrete realizations of plural morphemes in a particular language or in all existent languages (see Isac / Reiss 2008: 13). 'Idealized' indicates that these rules are true not of surface expressions or public, external languages, but rather of the internal reality of the brain/mind of the speaker-hearer at a highly abstract level (see Nefdt 2016: 361). Their explanatory power lies in what epistemologists call "minimalist idealization" (see Weisberg 2007, 2013), i.e. in leaving out the factors that are not essential for describing a phenomenon (see Nefdt 2016: 362) and in trying to reduce all possible concrete realizations to a minimal structure or linguistic model that generates all these implementations (Turing machine).

The first aim of an explanative language contact theory, from an I-language perspective, is to draw up a linguistic model of the internal principles and rules (I-Grammar) that govern the combination and recombination of linguistic features from different languages in the scenario of the mind of

the bilingual person, i.e. at the first of the Muyskenian levels. The key question here can be summarized as follows (see ABOH 2015: 4): which principles govern and which processes explain the ways in which the linguistic characteristics from different linguistic sources (languages) are combined in a bilingual speaker's I-language?

Secondly, an explanative language contact theory should aim to display the grammar changes at the level of MUYSKEN's second main scenario, that of the bilingual community, or population. According to MUYSKEN, the methods and analyses of sociolinguistics are the most appropriate to this level, since "[l]anguages do not exist in an ecological vacuum. The lives of the people who speak a language influence its very nature and properties in many ways" (MUYSKEN 2013: 266).

While it is true that sociolinguistic data can be integrated at this level establishing, for instance, which social factors have allowed a particular linguistic variant to spread through a population, an explanative approach should, however, aim to demonstrate how, from a structural perspective, a linguistic innovation which has arisen at the individual level becomes part of the stable grammatical system of a bilingual community (see ABOH 2015: 5). Therefore, a contact hypothesis must above all "be anchored in solid grammatical analyses" (KIPARSKY 2015: 69). Summing up: an accurate analysis of the phenomenon of language contact from the point of view of the I-language approach necessitates a methodological and theoretical distinction between the individual and population levels (see

ABOH 2015: 314). Investigating language contact at the individual level means tracing new developments in a bilingual speaker's internal knowledge, comparing them with the grammar shared by the population, as he/she combines and recombines two (or more) linguistic sources in his/her I-language. Investigating language contact at the population level, on the other hand, means analyzing the historical change that takes place when an innovation in the feature setting of the internal language knowledge at the individual level become part of the whole population's shared grammar.

In the next two sections I will present examples of analysis at both these levels, taking as my case study a German-based variety still spoken in Northern Italy, Cimbrian, which has been evolving in a contact situation for many centuries. I will first focus on a case of diachronic change, investigating a grammar phenomenon that is shared at the community level; then, I will consider how this phenomenon may evolve, using data from one particular speaker to support the idea that a synchronic change is taking place (at least in the minds of some bilingual Cimbrian speakers), and, perhaps, may become part of the grammar of the entire community.

3. Change at community level: the diachronic path

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to explain how a syntactic feature that originates from a foreign linguistic source, i.e. Italian, has been integrated into the typologically different grammar system of a German-based minority language, i.e. Cimbrian. I refer to the declarative subordinating conjunction *ke* 'that', which Cimbrian evidently borrowed from Italian or the surrounding Italo-romance dialects. This syntactic feature is now shared by the entire speaker population; it belongs to the stable grammar system of today's Cimbrian and represents the norm for learners. Before analyzing the syntax of *ke*, we should look at the sociolinguistic situation in the Cimbrian communities. Cimbrian is a German-based

minority language which was, for centuries, spoken in a relatively wide territory: a rough triangle, with the Northern-Italian cities of Trento, Verona and Bassano del Grappa at its corners (see BIDESE 2004, to appear). This German variety, which shares the majority of its phonological features with the Southern-Bavarian dialects, is now only used in everyday life in the small mountain village of Lusérn / Luserna in the Province of Trento. According to the 2011 census, 1,072 people in the Province of Trento declared themselves to belong to the Cimbrian minority group; in Lusérn this corresponded to 85.3 % of the population (i.e. 238 of the 279 inhabitants as

of 9th October 2011) (see LANZAFAME 2014).[2] In the other communities only a handful of older people still actively speak Cimbrian, although there are many efforts, at least, to maintain the memory of the language and keep the cultural heritage alive, through language courses, activities in schools, social media in Cimbrian, Web pages and many other initiatives.

The linguistic situation of Lusérn has been characterized over the last 150 years by a stable collective bilingualism (see KOLMER 2012: 58–69). Cimbrian was the language of early education, spoken in the family and the community, whilst Italian was primarily used at school and outside the village. In recent decades, Italian has progressively gained influence, even as an early education language. Today, families in which Cimbrian is still transmitted as mother tongue are an exception and the number of early bilinguals is therefore decreasing. On the other hand, many local government initiatives to stabilize multilingual competences support the inter-generational transfer of Cimbrian at school and in other educational environments. We can thus consider the linguistic situation in Lusérn to be, in all respects, a case of I-language contact, since this kind of bilingualism presupposes two internal systems in contact.

At the lexical level, isolation from German-speaking territories and many years of contact with speakers of Romance varieties led, on the one hand, to the preservation in Cimbrian of archaic words from earlier stages in the history of German, and, on the other, to a massive lexical borrowing from the surrounding Italo-romance dialects. Among the former, the verb *khön* 'to say' (cf. Got. *quiþan*, OHG *quëdan*, late old Bavarian, late 11th–12th century, *choden* 'to say') or the denomination *öbe* 'sheep' (cf. Ger. **awi-*, OHG *ou*, *ewi* 'ewe') can be mentioned. With regard to the second phenomenon, GAMILLSCHEG (1912) reconstructs four different borrowing stages, from the very beginning of the colonization (cf. for instance the toponyme *Folgràit* 'Folgheria' = Lat. *filicarētum* 'the place of the ferns'; the animal name *glair* = Lat. *glis* 'dormouse' or the tools used by the first generation of immigrants to clear the land for their farms *bodàil* = Lat. **batíllum* > *patulum* 'shovel' and *ronkòu* 'billhook' = Lat. *runcāre* 'weed, thin out') up to his day (early 20th century).

According to the classical implicational hierarchy proposed by MUYSKEN (1981), Cimbrian borrowed almost all the word classes – from the substantive to the subordinating conjunction – with the exception of determiners and clitics (see 3):

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[2] It is not easy to say what the consistency of the group of speakers is. The 2001 census also surveyed the language competences of the members of the minority group, and obtained the following results: of the 259 people in Lusérn who at that time declared themselves to belong to the Cimbrian minority, 87.2 % said they understood the Cimbrian language and 84.8 % that they spoke it. Among the Cimbrians living outside Lusérn (603), 80.8 % said they spoke it, and 74 % that they could use it. CICCOLONE (2014) and SCHÖNTAG (2014) discuss some aspects of the vitality of the language and present an outlook for its future.

(3)   noun (*di fadìge* 'effort') > adjective (*surdat* 'deaf') > verb (*rivan* 'to finish') > preposition (*dopo* 'after'/ *fin* 'until') > coordinating conjunction (*ma* 'but') > quantifier (*zèrte* 'certain') > *determiner > pronoun (*zèrte* 'some') > *clitic > subordinating conjunction (*ke* 'that').

At the syntactic level, however, the centuries long contact with the Romance varieties did not lead to a transfer of structural patterns, in sharp contrast to the borrowings in the lexicon (see BIDESE / PADOVAN / TOMASELLI 2013). In fact, it gave rise to original structures that are unique among the German varieties and much more comparable to syntactic phenomena in other German-based minority languages in Italy.

3.2   The system of declarative complementizers in Cimbrian

As pointed out by both traditional grammar descriptions (see BACHER 1905, TYROLLER 2003, PANIERI et al. 2006) and formal studies (GREWENDORF / POLETTO 2009, 2011, PADOVAN 2011, KOLMER 2012, BIDESE / PADOVAN / TOMASELLI 2012, 2014, BIDESE / TOMASELLI 2016), Cimbrian displays a hybrid system of declarative complementizers. In fact, non-factive (volitional) verbs like *bölln* 'to want' and non-assertive (affective) verbs like *speràrn* 'to hope' select the 'modal' (autochthonous) complementizer *az* 'that':

(4)   a.   I bill/sperar, **azz**=ar *nèt* *au*=höar zo spila.[3]
             I want/hope, that=he not PART=stops $_{SBJV}$ to play.$_{FL}$

             'I want / hope, that he will not stop playing.'

       b.   I bill/sperar, **az**=ta[4]   dar spilar *nèt* *au*=höar   zo spila.
             I will/hope,   that=EXPL.SUBJ the player not PART=stops.$_{SBJV}$ to play.$_{FL}$

             'I want / hope, that the player will not stop playing.'

Az is also selected by negative forms like *nèt gloam* 'not believe that', *nèt vorstian* 'not understand that', and in completive clause introduced by *'z iz schümma / bichte az* 'it is beautiful / important, that'.

    On the other hand, strongly assertive verbs such as *khön* 'to say' or semi-factive (knowledge) verbs like *bizzan* 'to know', perceptive verbs such as *seng* 'to see' and weakly assertive (epistemic) ones like *pensàrn* 'to think' must select the complementizer *ke* 'that', which is clearly borrowed from Italian or the Italian dialects of the region:

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(5)   a.   Si   khött, **ke** dar höart   *nèt* *au*   zo spila.
             she   says,   that he   stops.$_{IND}$ not   PART to play.$_{FL}$

             'She says, that he will not stop playing.'

       b.   Si   khött, **ke** dar spilar höart   *nèt* *au*   zo spila.
             she   says,   that the player stops.$_{IND}$ not   PART to play.$_{FL}$

             'She says, that the player will not stop playing.'

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[3] The data used, when no other specification is given, are natural sentences in Cimbrian that have been checked by the speakers.

[4] On the particle -*da* as expletive subject in Cimbrian see KOLMER (2005), GREWENDORF / POLETTO (2011), BIDESE / PADOVAN / TOMASELLI (2012) and BIDESE / TOMASELLI (2018).

As (4) and (5) clearly demonstrate, the differences between the two subordinating sentences are not limited to the selecting verbs and the complementizer type. There are also structural divergences, with regard to the following aspects:

(i)   the position of the finite verb with respect both to the negation (*nèt*) and the verbal particle (*au*): preverbal in (4), but obligatorily postverbal in (5);

(ii)   the form of the pronominal subject: clitic in (4a), but unbounded in (5a); moreover, if the subject is a full DP (see 4b–5b) then the particle *-da* is required, although only in the sentence introduced by *az* (see 4b), not in the one introduced by *ke* (see 5b);

(iii) the mood of the embedded verb: subjunctive (*auhöar*) in (4), indicative (*auhöart*) in (5).

Table 1 summarizes these structural divergences.

	declarative subordinating *az*	declarative subordinating *ke*
1.	az ... *nèt* Part.-**V**	ke ... **V** *nèt* Part.
2.	az=**Cl**$_{\text{SUBJ}}$ / az=*(ta) **DP**$_{\text{SUBJ}}$	ke **Pron**$_{\text{SUBJ}}$ / ke=(*da) **DP**$_{\text{SUBJ}}$
3.	az ... **V**$_{\text{SBJV}}$	ke ... **V**$_{\text{IND}}$

Tab. 1: Structural divergences between sentences introduced by *az* and by *ke*

At first sight, the differences between the two typologies of subordinate declarative sentences seem to rely on the fact that *ke* is a functional element borrowed from Italian, with its behavior thus depending on its own original syntax, which may be assumed to be brought into the Cimbrian sentence. This interpretation, however, is incorrect. In fact, we see immediately that the syntax of the subordinate clauses introduced by the declarative complementizer *ke* differs from the Italian: the position of the negation is postverbal in Cimbrian but preverbal in Italian (6). Moreover, Cimbrian must always realize the pronominal subject overtly, unlike Italian (6); unlike many North-Italian dialects, the form of the subject pronouns in Cimbrian is definitely not clitic (cf. 5a, above).

(6)   So   che *non* **smette** di giocare.   (Italian)
       know.$_{1SG}$,   that not   stops.$_{3SG}$ to play
       'I know, that he will not stop playing.'

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Finally, object clitics appear preverbally in Italian (7), whereas in Cimbrian declarative clauses they must show up as enclitic to the finite verb (8):

(7)   Dice   che non *lo*   **vede**   da   una   settimana.   (Italian)
       says.$_{3SG}$ that not   him   sees.$_{3SG}$ for a   week
       'S/he is saying, that s/he has not seen him for a week.'

(8)   Dar khött, ke   dar **sik**=*en*   nèt   sidar a boch.
       he   says,   that he   sees=him   not   for   a week

Secondly, if we compare the structure of the *ke*-sentences with that of the Cimbrian main clauses, we quickly find that it is the same. That means that the structure of the subordinate clauses introduced by the borrowed complementizer *ke* (10) corresponds exactly to the structure of the Cimbrian declarative main clauses (9):

(9) Dar / dar spilar **höart**   *nèt*   *au*   zo spila.
     he /   the player stops.$_{IND}$ not   PART   to play.$_{FL}$

(10) Si   khött, *ke* [dar /dar spilar **höart** *nèt*   *au*   zo spila].
      she   says, that he/   the player stops.$_{IND}$ not   PART   to play.$_{FL}$

This is confirmed by possible modifications of the main sentence (11a–b) which can also appear in the embedded clause in exactly the same way (12a–b):

(11) a. Häut   **höart**=ar   *nèt*   *au*   zo spila.
          today   stops=he   not   PART   to play
          'Today, he will not stop playing.'
      b. Häut   **höart**=(d)a *nèt*   *au*   zo spila dar spilar.
          today   stops=DA   not   PART   to play   the player
          'Today, the player will not stop playing.'

(12) a. Si khött, *ke*   [häut   **höart**=ar *nèt*   *au*   zo spila]
          she says, that   today   stops=he   not   PART   to play
          'she says, that today he will not stop to play.'
      b. Si khött, *ke*   [häut   **höart**=(d)a *nèt*   *au*   zo spila dar spilar].
          she says, that   today   stops=DA   not   PART   to play   the player
          'she says, that today the player will not stop to play.'

This is also the case with non-subject topicalization, which in Cimbrian requires a resumptive pronoun encliticized onto the finite verb (cf. 13 with 14):

(13) [*In   naügen   libar vo Andrea*][i] lest=ar=en[i]   gearn.
      the   new   book   of A.   reads=he=it.$_{MASC}$ gladly
      'He reads Andrea's new book gladly.'

(14) Si khött,   ke   [in   naügen libar vo Andrea][i]   lest=ar=en[i]   gearn.
      she says,   that the   new   book of A.   reads=he=it.$_{MASC}$ gladly
      'She says that he is reading Andrea's new book gladly.'

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Finally, other typologies of subordinate sentence in Cimbrian are introduced by an autochthonous subordinating element and display the same structure as *ke*. Consider:

I. Facultatively,[5] adverbial clauses introduced by *bo* 'wo' (15) and interrogative clauses introduced by *benn* 'when' (16). Mandatorily, adverbial (17a) and interrogative clauses (17b) introduced by *umbrómm* (etymologically *um + warum*) 'because / why' (see BIDESE/TOMASELLI 2016):

(15) Dar   balt heft å   *bo*   'z **höart**=(d)a au   dar beg.
      the   wood begins   where it ends=DA   PART   the path
      'The wood begins just where the path ends.'

(16) Bar bizzan nèt   *benn* 'z **khemmen**=(d)a di   khindar   vo   schual haüt.
      we   know   not   when it come= DA   the   children   from   school today
      'We don't know when the children will come back from school today.'

(17) a. I pin kontént,   *umbrómm* dar / darspilar **höart** *nèt* au   zo   spila.
         I am   happy,   because   he / the player stops.ᵢND not   PART to   play
         'I am happy, because he / the player does not stop playing.'
      b. I vors=mar, *umbrómm* dar / dar spilar **höart** *nèt* au   zo   spila.
         I ask=me.DAT, why   he / the player   stops.ᵢND not   PART to   play
         'I wonder why he / the player does not stop playing.'

II. Facultatively, indirect constituent questions introduced by *ber* 'who' (18) and *baz* 'what', the latter both as subject (19a) and object (19b). Mandatorily, those introduced by a wh-phrase (20) (see GREWENDORF / POLETTO 2011) or by *bem* 'whom' (21) (see BIDESE / PADOVAN / TOMASELLI 2014: 499–501):

(18) I vors=mar,   *ber* häut   **spilt**=(d)a nèt.
      I ask=me.DAT,   who   today   plays=DA   not
      'I wonder who he / the player will not beat today.'

(19) a. I vors=mar, *baz* häut   **khint**=(d)a nèt   vür.
         I ask=me.DAT, what today   comes=DA   not   PART
         'I wonder what will not happen today.'
      b. I vors=mar,   *baz* dar / dar spilar vintzart nèt   häut.
         I ask=me.DAT, what he / the player   wins   not   today
         'I wonder what he / the player will not win today.'

(20) I vors=mar,   *belar*   *spilar*   'z **spilt**   nèt   haüt.
      I ask=me.DAT, which   player   it plays   not   today
      'I wonder which player will not play today.'

(21) I vors=mar,   *bem*   dar / dar spilar **mèkket** nèt   haüt.
      I ask=me.DAT, whom   he / the player   beats   not   today

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[5] 'Facultatively' means that the word pattern that is typical for *az*-sentences is also possible.

'I wonder who he / the player will not beat today.'

All these facts strongly suggest that the integration of *ke* into the syntax of Cimbrian followed a path given by the existing syntax of the receiving language, which made the integration process fully compatible with itself. In fact, *ke* behaves exactly like other autochthonous complementizers which trigger a word order pattern in a subordinate clause symmetric to that of the main clause. There is evidence from other phenomena that Cimbrian is probably discarding the subordinate asymmetric word order (the *az*-word pattern) and extending the symmetric one (the *ke*-word pattern) to more and more types of subordinate clause (see BIDESE / TOMASELLI 2016). This is, however, an evolution internal to Cimbrian syntax, and represents the structural prerequisite for the borrowing of *ke*, which, crucially, is a lexical rather than a syntactic borrowing.

3.3   The nature of Cimbrian *ke* and *ke*-introduced clauses

Although the borrowed complementizer *ke* clearly plays an important role in the semantic interpretation of the sentence, since it introduces the embedded part of it, at the syntactical level it seems to behave as a peripheral element, unlike the autochthonous *az*. In fact:

(i)   *ke* does not block the rise of the finite verb that ends up in a position left of the negation *nèt* (cf. 1. in Table 1 above);
(ii)   it is not able to incorporate a subject clitic or the particle *-da* (cf. 2. in Table 1 above), so that the form of the pronoun cannot be clitic and the full DP does not need to have the particle *-da* as required by *az*;
(iii)   it selects the indicative which is the default mood (cf. 3. in Table 1 above).

All these characteristics suggest that *ke* is used for syntactically opaque contexts into which it is unable to govern. It is in fact realized in a peripheral position that does not interfere with the movement of the finite verb to the left periphery of the sentence; moreover, crucially, it does not enter into dependencies which require mood. In all respects, the sentences introduced by *ke* display the indicative throughout. In other words, *ke* does not behave as a 'real' complementizer, but rather as a clause type element. Its function is to indicate a subordinate clause semantically. The syntactic structure of such a clause is, however, that of a matrix clause.

The question that now arises is why dependent clauses introduced by an assertive verb are porous for the insertion and, therefore, for the borrowing of *ke*, while those selected by non-assertive verbs are not. The answer may possibly be found in the nature of assertive complements, which we will now consider briefly. HOOPER / THOMPSON (1973) demonstrated that there is a strong link between assertive predicates and embedded root phenomena, in particular Verb Second

(V2) effects. This connection was formulated in WIKLUND et al. (2009: 1915) as 'The Assertion Hypothesis':

(22) 'The Assertion Hypothesis':
      The more asserted (the less presupposed) the complement is, the more compatible it is with V2 (and other root phenomena).

There has been extensive discussion of this connection with regard to the embedded V2 in the Scandinavian languages (see among many others HEYCOCK 2006 and WIKLUND et al. 2009 for an overview). Very similar to Cimbrian, Norwegian and Swedish (24) clearly show a V > NEG vs. NEG > V asymmetry between assertive and non-assertive complements. While the former introduce clauses with V2 structure (= V > NEG), the latter do not (= NEG > V) (cf. 23a–24a with 23b–24b, data taken from WIKLUND et al. 2009):

(23) a. Han sa   at   han **kunne** *ikke* synge   I   bryllupet.
         he   said   that he   could   not   sing   in   wedding-the
         'He said that he could not sing at the wedding.'
      b. *Han tvilte   på   at   hun **hadde** *ikke* møtt denne   mannen.
         he   doubted   on   that she had   not   met this   man-the
         'He doubted that she hadn't met this man.'

(24) a. Han sa   att   han **kunde** *inte* sjunga på bröllopet.
         he   said   that he   could   not   sing   on wedding-the
         'He said that he could not sing at the wedding.'
      b. *Han tvivlar på att   hon **har** *inte* träffat den   här mannen.
         he   doubts on   that she has   not   met   this here man-the
         'He doubts that she hasn't met this man.'

Although Faroese and Icelandic do allow sentences like (23b) and (24b), they show other embedded root phenomena as non-subject topicalizations that are only possible in assertive – and banned in non-assertive – complements (see WIKLUND et al. 2009 for further details and examples). Scandinavian languages thus show structural asymmetry between assertive and non-assertive complements through differences in the word order pattern of the embedded clauses. In doing so, they maintain the same complementizer and do not change the mood of the embedded verbs.

There are, however, languages which display a double series of complementizers, depending on whether or not the subordinate clause displays a modal distinction (similar to the Latin differentiation between *quod* and *ut*). Consider, for instance, the well-known case of the Salentino dialect, which uses the complementizer *ca* + IND for declarative or epistemic contexts and *cu* + SBJV for modal contexts (CALABRESE 1993, DAMONTE 2010). The same phenomenon can be found in Southern Calabrian dialects (*ca* vs. *mu/ma/mi*) (see ROHLFS 1969: § 786a, TRUMPER / RIZZI 1985) and in some other Southern Italian vari-

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eties (LEDGEWAY 2004, 2005, 2007). A differentiation between declarative and volitional contexts and complementizer selection has also been recognized in Rumanian (see FARKAS 1992), Albanian, Bulgarian (see METZELTIN 2016: 157) and Greek (GIANNAKIDOU 1998, 2009, 2013).

In order to explain the distinction between the two typologies of embedded clause and to answer

the question of why the declarative and epistemic context became permeable for the insertion of the borrowed complementizer *ke* while the modal one did not, we should take into account the (non)veridicality condition,[6] i.e. the positive or negative truth validity of the complement clause (see HOOPER 1975: 95). Assertive predicates in the main clause prototypically encode the positive truth validity of the embedded sentence (+VERIDICAL) which is realized by the default mood indicative, while volitionals or negative expressions in the main clauses select the subjunctive mood which does not allow such a positive inference (-VERIDICAL) (see GIANNAKIDOU 2009, DAMONTE 2010). Moreover, modal complement clauses do not display any autonomous temporal reference (see CALABRESE 1993: 45–48, LOMBARDI 1998: 618–619, DAMONTE 2008: 98); they acquire their reference time from the tense of the matrix clause. According to CALABRESE (1993: 45–48), it is an essential quality of volitional verbs to be "characterized by the property of requiring a [+ANAPHORIC TENSE] in the embedded clause", i.e. to be bound by the tense of the matrix clause. In contrast, assertive complements do not show any reduction of the veridicality of the proposition (see BECKER 2014: 57–58, HASSLER 2016: 302) and display a deictic tense, which "refers to a specific point in time" (CALABRESE 1993: 46) without necessarily being bound by the tense of the main clause.

In conclusion, the three aspects considered above – (i) V2 and structural root phenomena under the assertion hypothesis; (ii) modal veridicality and (iii) deicticity, i. e. non-anaphoricity of tense – show that clauses introduced by assertive predicates are structurally much more independent than those selected by modal predicates. Moreover, the complementizer introducing assertive complements does not enter into an Agree-relation with the verb of the embedded clause, although those introducing modal complements do (see DAMONTE 2008: 90). This fact suggests that assertive complement clauses are syntactically a favorite context for the insertion of functional elements that only play a peripheral role in the structure of the sentence. This seems to be the exact case with Cimbrian *ke* borrowed from Italian, which – as shown above – takes a position from which it cannot enter any dependencies in the embedded clause. Conversely, this also explains why, in modal complements, *az* has resisted being substituted by *ke* as it plays a greater syntactic role in the sentence. At this level the simple insertion of functional elements from a contact language should be considered structurally

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precluded or at least severely limited. The same conclusion has been reached with regard to the borrowing of English *wh-ever*-words in Acadian French spoken on Prince Edward Island, see the following examples supplied by KING (2000: 151):

(25) Il fallait   **whoever**   qu' avait   la balle, fallait   qu'   il
      it was-necessary whoever   that had   the ball was-necessary that he
      alle   faire de   quoi.
      SBJV go   do   something
      'It was necessary that whoever had the ball go do something.'

(26) Il courait   **wherever**   que   ç' a   arrêté.
      he was-running   wherever   that   it has stopped
      'He ran wherever it stopped.'

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[6] I am grateful to Werner Abraham for having discussed this point with me. For further explanations see NISHIWAKI (2017).

(27) Tu   peux peinturer   la maison **whichever**   couleur que   tu   veux.
      You   can   to-paint   the house whichever   colour   that you   want
      'You can paint the house whichever colour you want.'

(28) Je   partirons   **whenever** que   tu   veux.
      1SG   will-leave   whenever   that you   want
      'We will leave whenever you want.'

In fact, according to KING (2000: 165–166):

> while they [= *wh-ever*-words] play an important role in semantic interpretation, they do not also undergo *wh*-movement, as simple *wh*-words (*who*, *why*, etc.) do. Thus we see that those *wh*-words with the greater syntactic role have not been borrowed. This finding is in line with the results obtained by a number of researchers who have noted that when function words are borrowed, they are most often those which play a peripheral role in sentence-level grammar [...]. Despite surface appearances, we can conclude, then, that the effect of borrowing English-origin *wh*-words on the grammar of Prince Edward Island French, and on the grammars of other Acadian varieties as well, has been peripheral [...]. The nature of the borrowing is similar to that examined in earlier chapters, in that new lexical items are added to an existing category.

We now come back to the question of how the borrowed complementizer *ke* became part of the structure of Cimbrian, integrated into the grammar shared by the whole population. We have noted that, independently from *ke*, Cimbrian shows a development towards a weakening of the asymmetry between main and embedded clauses (see also BIDESE 2008 and KOLMER 2012) that also involves autochthonous complementizers. Putting this result into a broader context, we have demonstrated that the expansion of the main-embedded symmetry we observed in Cimbrian can also be detected in Germanic varieties which have not evolved under pressure from typologically different languages. Therefore, such expansion may, perhaps, represent a general diachronic tendency independently from language contact. Along this developmental path, assertive complements offer an environment which – due to their particular nature, as structurally independent clauses – was sensible to infiltration by an element taken from surrounding varieties. In fact, *ke* behaves as a peripheral element and does not play a syntactic role

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in the Cimbrian embedded clause; it acts much more as a semantically relevant element. The best evidence of this is the fact that the modal (volitional) context resists any infiltration by *ke*. The role of the modal complementizer is much greater than that of the assertive complementizer and could not be easily substituted. In conclusion, even though Cimbrian borrowed a functional element from Italian, there is no evidence of a corresponding transfer of a syntactic pattern from one language to the other: *ke* behaves as Cimbrian syntax requires.

4. Change at the individual level: the synchronic path

In the previous section, we described, from an I-language perspective, how a featural innovation of internal language knowledge (possibly introduced years before at the individual level, to spread gradually across the speaker's community) has been integrated into the system of the Cimbrian grammar. Unfortunately, we do not know when this innovation at the individual level happened and how long it took for the feature to gain acceptance among the whole population. Nevertheless, we can now observe a further step of this developmental path, which, again, crucially starts at the individual

level. In doing so, we are able to focus on an example of feature recombination in the mind/brain of at least some bilingual speakers, regardless of whether or not it might spread across the entire community. As shown in section 3, Cimbrian declarative subordinate clauses display a very clear dichotomy with regard to the type of matrix predicate, the complementizer, the word order pattern and the mood of the embedded sentence. This dichotomy can be summarized as follows (see BIDESE / PADOVAN / TOMASELLI 2013, BIDESE 2017):

(29)   non-assertive/volitional predicate + *az* + asymmetric word order + SBJV

vs.

assertive/epistemic predicate + *ke* + symmetric word order + IND

However, a survey during which the subjects – all fluent speakers of Cimbrian – were asked to translate Italian sentences into Cimbrian, revealed that a third possibility is given in addition to the two in (29).[7] In fact, focusing on the assertive-epistemic verb *gloam* 'to believe / to think', which is compatible with both the string *az* + SBJV and *ke* + IND, we obtained the following Cimbrian possibilities (see 31) in response to the one stimulus sentence in Italian (see 30):

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(30)   Stimulus sentence: *Loro credono che (lui)* **sia.**SBJV   *arrivato tardi*
                       they believe   that (he) be.SBJV   arrived   late
                       'They think that he arrived late'

(31) a. Sa   gloam   **ke**   er   *iz*   gerift   spet
          they believe that he   is.IND   arrived   late
      b. Sa   gloam   **azz**=ar   *sai(be)*   gerift   spet
          they believe   that=he.CLIT is.SBJV   arrived late
      c. Sa   gloam   **ke**   er   *sai(be)*   gerift   spet
          they believe that he   is.SBJV   arrived   late
      d. *Sa   gloam**azz**=ar   iz   gerift   spet
          they believe that=he.CLIT is.IND   arrived   late

Firstly, we note that (31a) and (31b) represent the well-known patterns. The difference between the two sentences relies on the fact that (31a) is used "when the speaker has a strong presupposition concerning the truth value of the complement clause" (PADOVAN 2011: 287), whereas (31b) does not allow this kind of inference. This confirms the explanation about the nature of the difference between the *ke*-complements and the *az*-complements we provide in section 3. Secondly, an unexpected pattern shows up, namely (31c), in which the complementizer *ke* selects the mood SBJV, a result that is surprising, given our generalization in section 3. Thirdly, whereas *ke* can be compatible with SBJV, *az* is totally excluded with IND (see 31d). What does this asymmetry tell us?

    In comparison with the two strings *az* + SBJV and *ke* + IND, the sentence (31c) introduces a clear innovation into the system. In fact, the borrowed complementizer *ke* appears together with SBJV, which

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[7] The results have already been published in BIDESE / PADOVAN / TOMASELLI (2013) and discussed in detail. I refer to this study for further explanations.

is otherwise strictly restricted to *az*-complements. This can be interpreted as a signal that *ke* may be becoming more integrated within the Cimbrian system, since it is beginning to establish an Agree-relation with the verb of the embedded clause.[8]

Further sentences in which we elicited the same construction again contain the verb *gloam* 'to believe' (see 32) or the negative form *'z iz nèt khött* 'it is not certain' (see 33), which trigger the possibility of a non-veridical interpretation (NISHIWAKI 2017):

(32) Italian stimulus sentence:

Credo	*che*	*Gianni*	***sia***	*già*	*arrivato*	*a*	*Trento*
believe.1SG	that	G.	be.SBJV	already	arrived	in	T.

I gloabe	**ke**	dar Gianni	*sai(be)*	sa	gerift	ka Tria
I believe	that	the G.	be.SBJV	already	arrived	in T.

'I think that Gianni has already arrived in Trento'

(33) Italian stimulus sentence:

Non è	*detto*	*che*	*Gianni*	***venga***	*con*	*noi*
not is	said	that	G.	come.SBJV	with	us

'Z iz nèt	khött	**ke**	dar Gianni	*khemm*	pitt üs
It is not	said	that	the G.	come.SBJV	with us

'It is not certain that Gianni will come with us'

Such constructions were confirmed in a follow-up questionnaire. Moreover, the possibility for *ke* to select the subjunctive mood is also mentioned by TYROLLER (2003: 238), who interviewed many more speakers (not including those who produced the data presented here). All this supports the conclusion that allowing *ke* to select the subjunctive mood should not be simply interpreted as a performance error, but rather as a potential extension of the use of *ke* which, in some contexts, seems to be realized by some speakers in connection with SBJV as a third possibility, in addition to *az* + SBJV and *ke* + IND. If this interpretation is correct, the speakers who accept or even produce this construction are recombining features from the two language sources in an innovative way, thereby changing the featural setting of the Cimbrian system. Whether or not this innovation will make its way through the speakers' community and become a property of the grammar of the language cannot yet be predicted. At present, *ke* + SBJV is clearly refused by the majority of speakers; only a very small minority seem to accept it.

Whereas the question about the future of this innovation at the community level must be left open, the one about how this new pattern might have arisen at the individual level can be answered; it confirms once again that each change of the grammatical system only happens in accord with the system itself.

In fact, taking a closer look at the structure of the clause in which *ke* shows up with the subjunctive mood, we see that the subjective mood is the only feature of an *az*-complement that we find

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[8] We are fully aware that the situation in which these data were elicited is very peculiar as the speakers had to perform a translation task (see YAĞMUR 2004). In fact, this methodology was chosen precisely in order to reproduce a strong attrition effect on the L1 that could favor the recombination of syntactic features.

in connection with *ke*. The other characteristics – i.e. the enclitisation of the subject pronouns or of the particle *-da* onto the complementizer *ke* (see 34) and the asymmetric word order (see 35) – are totally excluded in this context (see BIDESE/PADOVAN/TOMASELLI 2013, BIDESE 2017):

(34) a. *Sa   gloam   **ke**=d=*e*   sai   gerift   spet
         they believe that=d=I   be._{SBJV} arrived   later

    b. *Sa   gloam   **ke**=*da*   dar Gianni sai   gerift   spet
         they believe that=da   the G.   be._{SBJV} arrived later

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(35) *Sa   gloam   **ke**   er *nèt*   sai   gerift   spet
       they believe that he not   be._{SBJV} arrived later

This fact demonstrates that even in those contexts in which *ke* is compatible (at least for a few speakers) with the subjunctive mood, it is definitely not taking the place of *az*, since the other features that characterize the syntax of the *az* complements remain fully unaffected. This leads us to the conclusion that the innovation simply consists of the infiltration of the *ke* complements by a single feature, i.e. [+MOOD], without any further structural change (see BIDESE / PADOVAN / TOMASELLI 2013). We can speculate that in this way *ke* + SBJV will spread, being selected by an increasing number of predicates, and possibly take over the role of the *az* clauses, which might consequently be discarded, consistently with the general evolution of Cimbrian towards a full asymmetry between main and embedded clause.

The crucial point is that, even if this is the case, *ke* does not simply substitute *az* by taking the latter's syntactic place, instead it finds its path to integration within the syntax of Cimbrian through single innovative steps which are consistent with the syntactic texture of the receiving language. According to KIPARSKY (2015: 73):

> a complex subsystem of grammar cannot be dismantled in one fell swoop, but only in minimal steps […]. Change can then be modeled as the promotion of constraints within grammatical subsystems through a series of local optima.

This explanation is confirmed by the fact that the clauses introduced by *az* show no signs of change. They, in fact, conserve their original structure and do not undergo any modification (see 31d, above).

5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to help clarify some fundamental issues concerning contact linguistics. More specifically, in section 1 we formulated the following questions (here repeated as 36 and 37):

(36)   What is language contact and which levels of investigation should be kept distinct in language contact research?

(37)   What should an explanatory approach to contact linguistics look like?

After the theoretical discussion in section 2 and the examples investigated in section 3 and section 4, we can now summarize our proposal.

First of all, we saw that a methodological distinction needs to be drawn between the level of bilingual individuals, on the one hand, and that of the bilingual population, on the other. The former, according to MUYSKEN (2013), is the

scenario of brain connectivity, and the latter the specific contact scenario in the speaker's community.

Secondly, we propose an approach to the brain connectivity scenario of language contact that capitalizes on the well-known definition of I-language established by CHOMSKY (1986). The basic idea is that research on language contact cannot simply rely on similarities between the surfaces of the investigated linguistic phenomena in two languages to derive a supposed causal dependency. Research must aim to theorize how language contact happens in the brain / mind of the bilingual individual by modeling their abstract linguistic competence. By reducing concrete realizations to a minimal structure, the model explains the production of all concrete implementations. In section 4, we discuss the innovation in the system of declarative embedded clauses in Cimbrian produced by some speakers and propose an analysis of the new pattern, regardless of any further evolution of this innovation.

At the population level, this explanation would undoubtedly require sociolinguistic analysis, which should address the question of how and under what conditions the innovation of either a speaker or a relatively small group of speakers can spread to an entire group. The crucial point is, however, that an explanatory approach must be well-grounded in linguistic analyses and thus fit to describe how a linguistic innovation that comes from another language has become part of the grammar of the investigated language. In section 3.3 we offer an example of how to explain the integration of the borrowed complementizer *ke* into the grammar of Cimbrian and show that it has been inserted at a very peripheral level, and does not simply substitute the correspondent conjunction in Cimbrian. This allows us, thirdly, to give a precise definition of language contact. At the individual level, it can be defined as the synchronic combination and recombination of abstract linguistic features that come from different languages in the mind / brain of the individual speaker. At the community level, language contact is the diachronic integration into the grammar of the whole population of a linguistic innovation first developed at the individual level.

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Finally, the Cimbrian data and the analyses discussed here seem to confirm a substantial result about the nature of language contact: unlike lexical borrowing, language contact does not transfer structural patterns from one language to another, but operates – at both levels – on the basis of the syntax of the receiving language. I do not deny that in special cases of contact, such as those of catastrophic language change, very different processes are at work – as a reviewer suggested –, but, in the contexts described above, contact never forces the existing structure, rather infiltrating it through single features, as is the case of the subjunctive in clauses introduced by *ke* in Cimbrian (cf. section 4), gradually integrating them, starting from a peripheral position, as shown in section 3.3.

Abbreviations:

FL	Flection	SBJV	Subjunctive
Ger.	Germanic	SG	Singular

Got.	Gothic		MASC	Masculine
IND	Indicative		DAT	Dative
Lat.	Latin		CLIT	Clitic
OHG	Old High German			
PART	(verbal) particle			

Got. Gothic MASC Masculine
IND Indicative DAT Dative
Lat. Latin CLIT Clitic
OHG Old High German
PART (verbal) particle

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