

India As a linguistic Area

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In linguistic areas of close proximity, there is diffusion of linguistic traits across genetic boundaries. Boss found that in North America, similarities between languages of contiguous areas could not be explained without existence of the phenomenon. Beyond simple borrowing of words and phonetic traits, even diffusion of morphology is possible.

Sapir called bilinguals the social carriers of change. His views on diffusions differed with respect to morphology and phonology. According to him, the phonetic borrowings followed a 'drift', where foreign sounds were assimilated unconsciously to preserve sound patterns. Morphological borrowings, too, were only superficial influences - any 'profound' influences will be claimed to be due to genetic relationship. While most accept Sapir's theory of language's resistance to more than superficial influence, there is proof to the contrary.

In India, the major language families (in focus, here) are Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Munda, with few other families in lesser quantities. Sanskrit (Indo Aryan) is best recorded, and Tamil is extensive as well; Mundas are mostly non-literary with few good preliminary accounts. Over millennia, the Dravidian boundary has retreated south from central India, except for few isolated regions. Indo Aryan mostly encompasses the north, and Munda has large, small islands among both regions. Sanskrit records show that ^{it had} ~~so early~~

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Dravidian words as early as the Rig Vedic times. Bilingualism and Dravidian were abandoned one time for Indo Aryan. There is not as much known about the other pairwise interactions. There are mostly borrowings from Indo Aryan to the other too, though vice versa exists.

Three main diffusion types - 'Indianisation' of Indo Aryan; common trait in antequous languages with unknown source; common trait but with a known source. The first is shown by retroflex sounds in Sanskrit - found in Proto-Dravidian, but not Proto-Mundari or any other PIE branch. Bilingualism in Pre-Dravidian and Pre-Indo Aryan caused the redistribution of old Indo Aryan allophones to retroflex. Another example is of the belt from South Arya to Andhra to north Kannada to Marathi of presence of the $tʃ/dʒ$ and $tʃʰ/dʒʰ$ affricates - originating from one language and spreading. †

Dravidian - Indo Aryan diffusion is most common. Some Indo Aryan changes are parallel to Indo European, but others (like inflectional marker morphemes) with Dravidian. A common feature across all three families is construction of verb stems / non finite verb forms as suffixes, closed by finite verb. In Marathi, Arya, Smthalic there is another Indianisation (from DI or MD) of nominalised / adjectivalised verb followed by past position, paralleled to pan-Dravidian and Mundari.

Reduplication and echoing are pan-Indian traits prob-
ably not native to Indo-Aryan, as they are nowhere in Indo-Eu.
Classifiers have spread from Indo-Aryan to all other families
(though they are not Indo-Eu.). classificatory systems in
Magadhan (modern Indo-Aryan) are similar with practically
the same morphemes, said to have originated in Magadhan
Apabhramṣa. Marathi is in contrast with its single classifier
and fixed construction, though still related. classificatory
systems are also found in some Dr. and Nd. languages,
borrowed and nativised from Indo-Aryan neighbours. Such
systems may be simple (Wardha) or complex (Malto). Malto
classificatory system has few unique features of its own.

Classificatory system is limited in Munda. The feature is
widespread in central and eastern India. Telugu and Kannada
are a bit different, with elements that may be free variation,
or suffixes. The phenomena of the two languages are closely
related and mixed. - mostly originating in Kannada via
Marathi calques. The classificatory systems may be called
a 'profound' morphological diffusion. It is possible that it
may be found in Indo-Aryan languages of Magadhan area of
SE Asia, but the case is not as clear as in India.