What Motivates Morphological Copying?

_A Review article of Martine Vanhove, Thomas Stolz, Aina Urdze, and Hitomi Otsuka (eds.). 2012: ‘Morphologies in Contact’_

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Abstract

Based on the papers included in the reviewed volume, this article puts forward a number of questions that are important for the theory of language change under contact. While there exist reliable methodologies to determine whether a given form represents the effect of language contact or not, and a slightly less reliable methodologies to establish whether a given function is a product of language contact, there is a relative paucity of studies discussing the motivation for language change under contact with respect to the functions encoded in the language.

Keywords

morphological copying – change in function – change in form

In the fall of 2009 the University of Bremen hosted a two-week Festival of Languages organized by Bremen linguists under the leadership of Thomas Stolz. During this festival a number of symposia were held. The present volume is a product of a symposium specifically dedicated to morphologies in contact.

This review article will present the content of the volume and will address some of the issues that have implications for the theory of language change and language structure and for the methodology of distinguishing changes resulting from language contact from changes resulting from language-internal motivation. Because the review article’s main objects are scientific questions, issues of felicity of organization, style and readability of various papers are not addressed, as they might detract from the scholarly substance of the papers.
The modern literature on language contact is quite extensive and comprises both theoretical studies and rich empirical documentation. In addition to numerous Creolist studies and the present journal, these publications include Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Thomason 2001, Heine and Kuteva 2005, Aikhenvald and Dixon 2007, Siemund and Kintana 2008, Johanson 2008, Matras 2009, Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009, and many publications, old and new, dealing with language contact in specific geographic areas, e.g., Miller 2012. The literature of the subject is growing, and as of the time of this writing there a number of publications ‘to appear’ or ‘in progress’.

Given the richness of the existing studies, the editors of the volume under review set their aim at collecting additional empirical studies documenting the effects of language contact, narrowing them down to morphology, which was once believed by some to be more resistant to borrowing in comparison to other domains of language, such as changes in lexicon or syntax. Although the aim of the editors was to provide additional empirical studies, in almost every paper included in the volume one can find interesting theoretical and/or methodological issues that are either explicitly raised or that emerge from the analyses or conclusions. The volume is organized by geographic and linguistic areas: Amerindian languages, discussed in papers by Mithun, Rose, and Chamoreau; Austronesian languages, represented by the single language Chamorro, discussed in a paper by Stolz; Balkan area languages, discussed in papers by Adamou, Iгла and Sechidou, Ralli, and Johanson; Romance languages, discussed in papers by Loporcaro, Pinto, and Tosco; Slavic languages, discussed in papers by Marra and Zajícová; and African languages, represented by the single language Beja, discussed in a paper by Vanhove. There is no implication that the contact phenomena exhibited by the languages selected for a given area are typical of or frequent for the area.

Some studies share the same questions: What kind of morphemes are borrowed/copied (the choice of terms is merely stylistic); what is borrowed, viz. the form and the function or only the function (there is one instance discussed of borrowing only the form); what kind of functional changes occur after a morpheme has been borrowed; what factors enable or, as the case may be, prevent borrowing; and what are the effects of borrowing on the language that borrows. To these questions, many of which are extensively discussed in the existing literature, at least one author, Martine Vanhove, adds the issue of the absence of morphological borrowing when one would expect such borrowing to occur.

In order to fulfill the two tasks of the review article, viz. a fair presentation of the content and a discussion of the issues involved, I shall discuss the papers in the order in which they are presented in the volume. The foci of this review article are the following questions:
• What methodology provides reliable tools for distinguishing between change resulting from language contact and change resulting from language-internal motivations or factors?
• In what way are the functional domains and individual functions coded in a language affected by language contact?
• What are the motivations for change through language contact?

Since not every paper in the volume explicitly addresses all of these questions, in a number of cases the analyses and conclusions in this review are based on my own extrapolations from the data presented.

1 Presentation of Studies

Mithun’s ‘Morphologies in contact: form, meaning, and use in the grammar of reference’ demonstrates that a language can borrow a function (‘categories and patterns’, in Mithun’s terminology) without borrowing the form (‘substance’, in Mithun’s terminology). The starting point for this study consists of data from Yuki, an extinct language once spoken in Northern California. The only known genetically related language is Wappo. Seven Pomoan languages, unrelated to Yuki and Wappo, are spoken in the geographic area between Wappo and Yuki. Wintun languages, unrelated to Yuki-Wappo and to Pomoan languages, are spoken in the area east of Yuki. The presence in Yuki of elements similar to those found in Pomoan languages but not present in Wappo strongly suggests that the presence of these elements in Yuki is a result of language contact. When at issue is the pairing of form and function, the comparison of facts in related and unrelated languages constitutes a sound and standard methodology to establish whether the given elements result from language contact. When the discussion concerns the function alone, the methodology should be complemented by another methodology that would demonstrate that the functions occurring in the two unrelated languages are not products of independent grammaticalizations, i.e. the encoding of a function in the grammatical system, but rather products of borrowing. The data for Mithun’s work come from previously published descriptive works and dictionaries for Yuki (Sawyer and Schlichter, 1984) and Wappo (Li and Thompson, 1993) and from Mithun’s own work on Pomoan languages.

The first issue that Mithun addresses is the shift in Yuki from a nominative-accusative system in pronouns to an agent-patient system. The related Wappo has a nominative-accusative system. Hence there are two possibilities: either Yuki has innovated and Wappo represents a retention, or Wappo has innovated
and Yuki represents a retention. Pomoan languages have the agent-patient system. Mithun proposes that Yuki has innovated, not merely because the otherwise rare agent-patient system is reflected in both the system of pronouns and in nominal case marking but also because the pattern of the agent-patient system in Yuki is similar to the pattern of the agent-patient system in Pomoan languages. The forms that encode the agent-patient system are different. This approach to studying language contact takes into consideration both functions and the way the functions are coded. Mithun also proposes an explanation for the change from the nominative-accusative to the agent-patient system. The explanation essentially involves a reanalysis of forms without a subject, whereby:

\[
\text{(subject) \ } \text{verb} \ \text{object becomes} \ \text{patient verb}
\]

something scared me I was/am scared

It should be kept in mind that the proposed reanalysis is not in itself proof of the innovation. The reanalysis could have gone in the other direction, i.e.:

\[
\text{agent patient verb could become a system of subject object verb}
\]

The second phenomenon that Mithun attributes to language contact is acquisition of the distinction between the first-person inclusive and first-person exclusive pronouns in Yuki. Here again, the related Wappo doesn’t have this distinction, but unrelated Wintun languages spoken to the east of Yuki do. According to Mithun, Yuki has borrowed a distinction found in Wintun languages without borrowing the Wintun forms. One would like to have here an argumentation that would rule out a possibility of independent grammaticalization of the distinction between first-person inclusive and exclusive pronouns. Such grammaticalizations are common across unrelated languages.

Wappo has two third-person pronouns, one of which encodes coreferentiality with the subject of the clause or the subject of a higher clause. Yuki does not have such a distinction, but Pomoan languages do, and the pronoun coding coreferentiality in Pomoan languages behaves in the same way as the pronoun coding coreferentiality in Wappo. Mithun concludes that the presence of the coreferential third-person pronoun in Wappo is a result of language contact. Again, it was the function that was copied rather than the form, as the forms of the pronouns in the two languages are different.

One may question whether the mere presence of a distinction between coreferential and non-coreferential subjects is sufficient proof of grammaticalization
of a function resulting from language contact. It is a plausible explanation, but not a proof. The same processes (even if we don't know what these processes were) that led to the grammaticalization of two third-person pronouns in Pomoan might have been responsible for the grammaticalization of two third-person subject pronouns in Wapppoo.

The fourth function that Mithun claims emerged in a language as a result of language contact is the coding of reference across sentences. Yuki has two clausal connectors, one indicating that the subject of the subsequent clause is the same as the subject of the preceding clause and the other indicating that the subjects of the two clauses are different. Wapo doesn't have such a system, but Pomoan languages and Maidan languages spoken further to the east do have a system indicating different subjects/events. Again, the presence of the distinction in Yuki may be a result of language contact, but theoretically it could also be the product of independent grammaticalization, possibly through the same processes that led to the grammaticalization of the distinction in Pomoan and Maidan languages. The use of different clausal conjunctions associated with different subjects and different (unexpected) events has been described in other unrelated languages (Frajzyngier, 1987; Frajzyngier and Katriel, 1991). A methodology for proving that the presence of similar functions in neighboring but unrelated languages is a result of contact when the forms coding the functions are different must take into consideration the relative frequency of the function cross-linguistically and the sources from which the markers coding a given function have grammaticalized, as Mithun does in her study (see also Frajzyngier and Shay, 2008).

For this reader, two other questions emerge from Mithun's study: (1) Why would one language copy a certain function while another language would not, especially when both languages are related, and so at one time were typologically similar, and both are in contact with the same donor languages? and (2) Why are certain functions borrowed and not others? Mithun's study points out that in each case of borrowing described in the paper there is an increase in the semantic functions coded in the language rather than a potential replacement of a function or a decrease in functions. It appears that an increase in functions is a frequent outcome of language contact. On the other hand, Stolz's paper in the volume mentions, via secondary sources, several documented cases of the loss of a function as a result of language contact.

The importance of Mithun's study is that it contains four cases of very plausible changes in functions resulting from language contact. In one case, viz. the change in pronouns and the case marking of nouns, the change was systemic,
involving a change of functions within the domain of coding relations between
the predicate and noun phrases.

Rose’s study ‘Borrowing of Cariban number marker into three Tupi-Guarani
languages’ provides one more piece of evidence that copying leads to enrich-
ing the functions coded in the language. Tupi-Guarani languages didn’t have a
plural number until they borrowed both the form and the function of the plu-
ral marker from Carib languages. The function of the marker has undergone
changes, but its phonological form can still be reconstructed, without too
many difficulties, as going back to the Carib marker *komo. Rose aims to pro-
vide a precise sociological and historical aspect of this borrowing. To that end,
she sketches the social relationship between the Cariban and Tupi phyla and
traces the history of the contact between the North-Amazonian Carib and the
Tupi-Guarani group. Rose considers four hypotheses regarding the scenario of
抄ing of the marker *komo. One is that it occurred before the three Tupi-
Guarani languages separated; another is that the copying occurred after the
three languages separated; another is that the copying occurred after some
Carib speakers joined the Tupi-Guarani speakers; and the last is that the copy-
ing occurred from a Carib pidgin. Rose considers all the options plausible. Of
considerable interest are semantic changes that the erstwhile plural marker
*komo has undergone since it was borrowed into Tupi-Guarani languages. In
Carib languages the marker *komo was a collective marker used mainly with
animate nouns. In some Tupi-Guarani languages its function as a collective
marker has been extended to inanimate nouns. Such semantic extensions are
not uncommon, and actually a number of plural markers cross-linguistically
come from erstwhile collective markings.

Rose explicitly addresses a few theoretical questions, among them the likeli-
hood of borrowing an inflectional marker, and confirms that this is not a rare
phenomenon. She rightly concludes that typological similarity facilitates
rather than triggers borrowing and, most important, that copying may be moti-
vated by the fact that a language is copying a function that it didn’t code before.

Claudine Chamoreau’s study ‘Spanish diminutive markers -ito/-ita in
Mesoamerican languages: a challenge for acceptance of gender distinction’
deals with the borrowing of diminutive and gender distinction. The two mark-
ers under discussion are portmanteau markers in Spanish, in that they encode
the category diminutive and the category gender. The aim of this study is to
explore the motivation for the copying of the markers, since most of the
Mesoamerican languages do have the diminutive markers, and the Yucatec
Maya has also gender markers. In languages that do not have a system of gen-
der, the masculine form -ito has been copied as a diminutive marker. In lan-
guages that do have a gender system, both -ito and -ita have been copied.
As expected, the borrowing of the diminutive markers did not cause the emergence of gender marking in languages that didn’t already have a gender system.

The social conditions and the mechanism of the borrowing are rather straightforward. There have been almost 500 years of contact between Mesoamerican languages and the politically and socially dominating Spanish. The borrowing occurred first through the borrowing of lexical items with the suffixes -ito and -ita and the subsequent analysis of these lexical items as consisting of a stem and a suffix. The suffix was then used with words in the native languages, sometimes together with the native diminutive markers. One would like to know whether the diminutive in Mesoamerican languages has the same function as the diminutive-cum-gender markers in Spanish. One would also like to know whether the borrowed Spanish diminutive markers have undergone semantic change since they were borrowed.

Thomas Stolz’s paper ‘Survival in a niche: on gender-copy in Chamorro (and sundry languages)’ purports to demonstrate that Chamorro has copied a gender system. Chamorro, an Austronesian language, borrowed hundreds of nouns and adjectives from Spanish. Spanish marks gender on nouns and adjectives, and the Spanish lexical items have been borrowed together with their gender markers.

Stolz begins his study with a most useful review of literature concerning the effects of language contact on gender systems, including not only cases of the emergence of gender but also cases of gender loss. His paper also provides a brief but useful description of the structure of Chamorro. Stolz departs from Corbett’s 1991 definition of gender as any kind of classification device, provided that it involves agreement. For Stolz, it is enough if there are formal markers on nouns that distinguish gender even if they do not trigger agreement phenomena (p. 96). I shall return to the importance of the fundamental issues of the functions of gender and agreement after the presentation of the facts in Chamorro.

Prior to contact with Spanish, there was no grammatical gender in Chamorro (p. 110). The previous studies of Chamorro do not include gender as a category of the language, even though individual examples may contain nouns and adjectives borrowed from Spanish that include Spanish gender markers.

The data for Stolz’s study were obtained through examination of the available dictionaries of Chamorro. They consist of pairs of Spanish borrowings that differ in their gender marking, such as bunita/bunito ‘pretty/handsome’. Stolz has found 300 of such pairs, all included in the appendix. All but a few of these lexical items refer to human beings and carry a selected number of characteristics, such as character traits, occupation, social role, bodily characteristics,
kinship, ethnonym, and religion (pp. 117–118). Given that their endings clearly distinguish gender, per Stolz’s interpretation of gender, these words are taken as evidence for the existence of gender in Chomorro. Unlike in some other languages on which Spanish has had an influence, however, Stolz does not list native words in Chomorro that have borrowed Spanish gender markers.

Another argument brought in to support the claim that Chomorro is a gender language is agreement. Agreement in Chomorro consists of the following phenomenon: If a female human is involved, and if a Spanish word is used to refer to the female human, the feminine variant of the Spanish noun is used. For example, in modifying a feminine noun in ‘The Chamorro women made themselves pretty’, a variant of bunita is used instead of bunito.

The claim that Chomorro is a gender language (p. 130) can be sustained only under a definition of gender that is tailored for the data on hand, like the one Stolz chose to select from Corbett (1991). The fundamental property with respect to gender is not the formal properties of the gender markers but rather the function of these markers, viz. what do they do in the language. All manifestations of gender, viz. the coding of gender on pronouns, determiners, demonstratives, verbs, adjectives, numerals, etc., are there to enable the fundamental function of gender, that of coding reference across discourse. Corbett (1991) devotes less than three pages (320–323) to the function of gender but nevertheless acknowledges that the major function of gender is reference tracking (Corbett, 1991: 322), thus repeating a proposal made 25 years earlier by Martinet (1967); see also Frajzyngier and Shay (2003: 175–188). Stolz makes no statement about the function of gender within Chamorro discourse, and there is no description of how the system of reference works in Chamorro. Agreement, as illustrated by the examples Stolz cites, points only to the fact that if the referent is a female, the Spanish modifier used to modify the female referent is marked feminine. This proves only one thing: that speakers of Chamorro know the system of gender agreement in Spanish noun-adjective constructions. It does not prove that the grammatical system of Chamorro has a gender system. Unless it is demonstrated that gender indeed plays a role, like that of reference tracking, within the system of the language, one can conclude only that the massive number of lexical items that Chamorro has borrowed from Spanish includes pairs of nouns and adjectives with masculine and feminine endings, and that Chamorro speakers have reinterpreted those endings in Spanish as referring to male and female referents rather than to masculine and feminine nouns, regardless of whether they are [+human] or not, as is the case in Spanish.

Evangelia Adamou’s ‘Verb morphologies in contact: evidence from the Balkan area’ is an ambitious study based on data from several language families.
and involving a relatively large number of verbal categories. Adamou uses a slightly modified typology of contact-induced change, as proposed in Heine and Kuteva (2005) (for an early typology see Haugen, 1950), Wohlgemuth (2009), and others, and applies it to the domain of verbal morphology. This typology consists of borrowing, where both the form and the function attached to the form are copied from another language; replication, where the function but not the form is copied from another language; loan verb markers, where the form is borrowed without the accompanying function; and assigning to a borrowed morpheme a function that didn't exist before in the recipient language (this proposal is attributed to Chamoreau in press). These four types are illustrated rather than discussed at any length and are not provided with the necessary evidence for their existence.

The first type, i.e. copying the form together with the function, is illustrated with two examples from Romani, in one case in a Turkish together with the Turkish morphology has been used in a Komotini Romani and another in which a Russian verb with Russian inflection has been used in a North Russian Romani sentence. I shall quote this example for the sake of discussion:

\textit{pisem po romanese}

\textit{write.1PL (Adamou wrongly glosses it as 2pl) in Romani}

\textit{‘We write in Romani’}

This sentence, quoted from Rusakov (2001), appears to be a sentence in phonetically slightly altered Russian with the use of just one Romani word, \textit{romanese}. Perhaps it is an example of code-switching rather than borrowing. There is a fundamental methodological issue in the argumentation here: Individual examples of the use of forms do not illustrate the copying of the verbal forms together with their inflectional function into the grammatical system of Romani, but rather the use of individual Turkish or Russian forms in individual sentences, which is quite a different phenomenon. If the grammatical morphemes with their functions were indeed borrowed into Romani, one would expect them to be used systematically with Romani lexical items. Maybe this actually is the case, but the study doesn’t demonstrate this. A number of verbs, together with their morphological markers, are borrowed from Turkish into various Romani varieties. Adamou labels this ‘paradigm transfer’, but this is in fact just copying of verbs along with their morphology; it is not evidence that morphological characteristics of Turkish have been copied into the Romani grammatical system. One example, quoted from Cech and Heinschnink (1996), illustrates the use of Turkish morphology in the preterit singular and Romani morphology in the preterit plural, but this involves the Slavic verb
vurtinava ‘to turn’. No evidence is provided that this phenomenon spread to other verbs in the language.

Perhaps stronger evidence of morphological borrowing is provided by the copying of the Turkish evidentiality marker \textit{miş} into Xanthi Romani varieties, where it occurs as a free morpheme, carrying the function of hedging on the truth of the proposition.

Data from Nashta, a Slavic language, illustrate the copying of a function without the copying of the form that codes the function. The first instance of such copying is the copying of a modal function marked by the future marker plus the aorist form of the verb. The other instance of copying is the emergence of the perfect in Nashta, realized by the equivalent of the verb ‘have’ and the past passive participle ending in \textit{no}. The source of the copying remains somewhat obscure. Adamou follows other scholars in her assumption that the perfect in Slavic is a borrowed category. That may well be the case, but one would like to see a cogent argument explaining why the mechanisms that led to the grammaticalization of the ‘have’ perfect in Romance languages could not have emerged independently, i.e. without being induced by language contact, in contemporary Slavic languages. The importance of the discussion of Nashta cannot be underestimated, as it provides some evidence for the changes in the grammatical system of the language that have resulted from borrowing.

Birgit Igla and Irene Sechidou’s ‘Romani in contact with Bulgarian and Greek: replication in verbal morphology’ deals with reflexive and passive morphology in two Romani dialects, one under the influence of Greek and the other under the influence of Bulgarian. The terms ‘passive’ and ‘reflexive’ are defined in reference to their roles with respect to the verb: the subject is the patient with a passive verb, while the agent and patient are identical with reflexive verbs (p. 163). This description of the categories does not meet a simple test of accuracy for Bulgarian, where reflexive markers can also occur with intransitive verbs (p. 165). Moreover, in Greek there is only one form, which is deemed to be polysemous with respect to reflexive and passive functions. In Bulgarian Romani, there is an increasing use of the reflexive marker \textit{pes} to code ‘passive’ meaning. In Greek influenced Romani there are two forms coding ‘reflexive’ meaning. While the study clearly demonstrates differences between the two varieties of Romani that are due to contact with other languages, it is not completely clear what are the functional implications of the contacts involved. The fundamental question, whether the Romani dialects code more or fewer functions as a result of borrowing, is not answered.

Angela Ralli’s study ‘Morphology in language contact: verbal loan blend formation in Asia Minor Greek (Aivaliot)’ demonstrates that, contrary to frequent but by no means universal assumptions, verbs are as easily borrowed as nouns
if the relevant structures in the donor language and the recipient language are similar. This is not a controversial finding.

Lars Johanson's study 'Mood meets mood: Turkic versus Indo-European', is a short but interesting study of modality coding in Turkish. The paper addresses a fundamental question with respect to language contact, viz. whether a given change is an effect of language contact or a result of independent language-internal change. In the simple clause, optative/voluntative modality (Johanson's terms) is marked by the inflectional form of the verb. In complex sentences, the same modality is also coded by inflectional forms of the verb, and there is no complementizer between the subordinate clause and the matrix clause. In many Turkic languages, however, there are sentences with complementizers, called 'junctors' by Johanson. These complementizers emerged in all Turkic languages that came into contact with various Indo-European languages, e.g. languages of Central Asia Uzbek and Uyghur, Iran-Iraq Azeri, Balkans Gagauz, Eastern Central Europe, Karaim, and Turkish in Cyprus. While the structures with complementizers in Turkic languages appear to be similar to structures in neighboring languages, Johanson proposes that perhaps copying is not the only mechanism responsible for the emergence of structures with ‘junctors’. Johanson proposes that language-internal processes in various Turkic languages were reinforced by the presence of similar structures in contact languages, a reasonable hypothesis.

Loporcaro's study ‘Contact-induced change in personal pronouns: some Romance examples’ deals with the pronominal systems in several Sardinian languages and in southern Campanian. At issue is the reduction of the pronominal system from a system coding four cases in Latin, viz. nominative, accusative/ablative, dative, and genitive, to a system that encodes only two cases, subject and object/oblique, as represented in Italian. The reduction of the pronominal system is characterized by Loporcaro as a drift in Pan-Romance, hence it is not a product of language contact. However, in Logudorese Sardinian, until early in the 20th century there was a four-way distinction between first- and second-person pronouns that included subject, direct object/indirect object, oblique, and comitative. Note that although this is a four-way distinction it is actually different from the four-way distinction in Latin. The evidence of contact-induced language change is provided by the fact that among speakers born after 1970 there is only a two-way distinction, between the subject form and the complement of preposition form. The preposition a is the marker of the object, and forms with other prepositions are the markers of oblique and comitative relationships. Loporcaro presents also the case of the Northern Logudorese dialect spoken in the village of Luras. The pronominal system in that language has undergone a change under the
influence of the surrounding Gallurese variety, but the outcome of this change is not a copy of the Gallurese pattern. The pronominal system of Luras includes a third-person plural pronoun unmarked for gender, in addition to the plural masculine and plural feminine forms. This system is different from Latin and different from surrounding languages. How such a system emerged remains an open question. How language contact contributed to the emergence of such a system, if it ever did, is another open question.

Immacolata Pinto’s paper ‘The influence of loanwords on Sardinian word formation’ is dedicated to examining the proposition that languages that are not national/official languages and that do not have a long written tradition are more resistant to change induced by contact with written varieties of other languages than are languages that are used as national languages. She narrows her scope of investigation to derivational morphology. This proposition is based on the observation that languages that are confined to oral transmission do not as readily copy morphemes that are accessible mainly through the written medium. The study is based on Sardinian and concerns the copying of derivational morphemes. The interesting finding of the study is that only suffixes, and not prefixes, have been copied into Sardinian. The explanation proposed for this fact involves the non-standard nature of Sardinian and the fact that many prefixes in Romance languages emerged as a result of contact with the written form of other languages. This does not explain why suffixes should be more amenable to copying than prefixes.

Mauro Tosco’s study ‘Swinging back the pendulum: French morphology and de-Italianization in Piedmontese’ demonstrates how the efforts to revitalize Piedmontese, and efforts to increase the distance between Piedmontese and the dominant Italian language, have led to the increased copying of French morphology. The interest of this paper is that it demonstrates that political processes may lead to the selection of a language, in this case French, other than the dominant language of the area from which to copy lexical items and sometimes derivational morphemes. The choice is purely political, meant just to increase the distance between Piedmontese and Italian. Tosco rightly questions the effectiveness of such political-linguistic choices, viz. how widespread is the acceptance of new forms.

Antonietta Marra’s ‘Contact phenomena in the Slavic of Molise: some remarks about nouns and prepositional phrases’ deals with a variety of Croatian spoken in Molise since the 15th century. The data come from questionnaires, guided interviews, and previous publications. In the Slavic of Molise the neuter gender has disappeared, and the nouns that used to be neuter have been assigned masculine or feminine gender. Many nouns that used to be neuter and now end in the vowel a are assigned to feminine gender.
Slavic Molise has borrowed six prepositions from Italian. All of these prepositions have functional equivalents in Slavic prepositions, which raises the interesting question, not addressed in the paper, of why Italian prepositions replaced Slavic prepositions with virtually the same functions. The accusative case in Molise, unlike in Slavic languages, comprises the direct object function, directional goal, and stative locative. Slavic Molise has borrowed the Romance preposition *do* ‘from’. The complement of this preposition is in the genitive case. Interestingly, the preposition *do* is used in the expression of possession. It appears that, together with the noun in the genitive case, it has become a marker of the source. Slavic Molise has lost the distinction between locative and accusative case. Why this distinction was lost is not addressed in the paper.

I shall just briefly mention the paper by Lenka Zajícová ‘Language contact, language decay and morphological change: evidence from the speech of Czech immigrants in Paraguay’. The paper deals with linguistic innovations by Czech immigrants representing several generations of speakers. Zajícová observes a large number of linguistic innovations Czech. The motivations for these innovations, according to the author, is the attrition of Czech forms rather than influence from Spanish.

The main question of Martine Vanhove’s paper ‘Roots and patterns in Beja (Cushitic): the issue of language contact with Arabic’ is why, despite the fact that Beja had many centuries of direct contact with Arabic, it displays so few morphological traces of this contact. The grammatical focus of this paper is the preservation in Beja of the root and pattern system, i.e. a system where the consonantal structure of the root represents the referential meaning, while vocalic and sometimes consonantal affixes represent relationships with other elements of the utterance and functions grammaticalized in the language, such as mood and aspect. This feature of grammatical organization is the same as that found in Arabic and most other Semitic languages. Vanhove does not state the reason for asking why this type of grammatical organization should be vulnerable and a potential target of replacement. Throughout her paper Vanhove demonstrates various kinds of similarities and differences between Beja and Arabic, and occasionally South Semitic languages, and concludes that the presence of the root and pattern system in Arabic contributed to the preservation of the root and pattern system in Beja.

2 Conclusions and Questions

The fundamental question with respect to borrowing, viz., what is the motivation for borrowing, is never addressed. The papers in the volume demonstrate
that a function may be borrowed from one language 1 to language 2 when language 1 doesn't already have this function. This is, on the face of it, a clear motivation: A language borrows a grammatical means to code a function. This simplified explanation is not satisfactory, however, because it does not explain why one specific function, rather than another function, has been borrowed. There are also cases where language 1 borrows a form from language 2 to code a function that is already coded by grammatical means in language 1. This is the case in Slavic Molise, which replaced six Slavic prepositions with six Romance prepositions without an apparent change in function.

An important question remains unanswered with respect to the copying/borrowing of functions: Given two languages in geographical and social contact, where one has a function that the other does not, under what conditions does this function get borrowed? And is there a hierarchy of functions in which some functions are more likely to be borrowed than others?

Most of the studies, with the notable exception of Mithun's paper, discuss morphology as if it were an isolated mechanism in language structure and as if the morphological phenomena, whether copied or not, could be explained in isolation from other coding mechanisms in the language. In Frjzyngier and Shay (2003) it is demonstrated repeatedly that morphological coding means interact with other coding means, viz. lexical categories, phonological coding means and linear order. Taking into consideration the functions coded in the entire grammatical system rather than just in the morphological system may explain why some morphemes are borrowed, along with their functions, and others not. The expectation would be that if the function is coded in any way in the grammatical system there is no language-internal motivation to copy the same function from another language. This may explain the relative stability of the grammatical system of Beja despite the centuries of contact with Arabic.

The volume does not contain a single study concerned with the loss of a function resulting from language contact. Would the loss of a function be a feature that distinguishes between language contact, which may result in the borrowing of a few morphological markers and their functions, and creolization? According to some Creolists (McWhorter, 2011), loss of a function that the lexifier language has (‘simplification’ in McWhorter’s terminology) is the main structural characteristic of Creoles.

Some of the fundamental questions regarding the copying of morphological characteristics have been addressed in Comrie (2008). This volume provides some valuable data for a future study of motivations of morphological and syntactic copying.
References


