Language Mixture, Contact and Semiotic Dynamics: Some Thoughts in Counterpoint to Schuchardt’s Approach

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Abstract

This paper compares the conceptual framework of Schuchardt’s perspective on language mixing (or at least my representation of it) with that of ‘semiotic dynamics’ as presented in several of my earlier works (Nicolaï, 2011, 2012a). These two approaches entail a same interest in the activities of individuals and groups (communication actors, etc.) who, in their ordinary usage, produce and transform languages. Thus the framework of semiotic dynamics introduces conceptualizations, obviously developed independently of the process which « Slawo-deutsches und Slawo-italienisches » exemplifies, but which, despite differing trajectories, intersects with it. This intersection justifies my assertion as to the work’s modernity and the usefulness of reviewing it. At the same time, this review broadens the scope of research and reflections in this field.

In counterpoint, I will look into the justified (or not) propensity of scholars and documenters to consider a priori the objects-languages with which they work as constitutively homogeneous entities, albeit subject to modification and transformation by a (contingent) contact situation.

Keywords

Language contact – dynamics of language – semiotic dynamics – language mixture – Schuchardt

1 My thanks to Margaret Duhnam for her English translation of this paper and to Mirko Radenkovic (S&F) for his English translation of the German quotations from Schuchardt.
Back to the 19th Century. Why Slawo-deutsches und Slawo-italienisches? 2

1918. This is the year, more than 30 years after the much remarked3 publication of “Dem Herrn Franz von Miklosich zum 20. Nov. 1883. Slawo-deutsches und Slawo-italienisches” (henceforth sdsi) by Schuchardt, a linguist well known for his work on mixed languages and creoles as well as for his anti-dogmatic positions towards neogrammatical approaches, that Meillet published an article—Les parentés de langues4—in which he lays out the principles of his historical approach to languages, affirming that genealogical continuity is grounded in the permanence of speakers’ desire and willingness to “continue” such or such a language, stressing the methodological importance of his linguistic distinction between native elements [éléments indigènes] and borrowings (emprunts), setting himself apart from Schuchardt. In Meillet’s view, what was essential for Schuchardt “was not the feeling and wish to carry on such or such a language; it was purely the wish to be understood by those to whom one speaks” [ce n’était pas le sentiment et la volonté de continuer telle ou telle langue ; c’était purement le souci d’être compris de ceux à qui l’on parle]. However, that being stated, he still had to admit the obvious, i.e. that the murky mixtures described by Schuchardt did indeed exist. Thus he allowed that “there has certainly been mention here and there of mixed populations whose linguistic status is unclear” [sans doute on a signalé ça et là des populations mixtes qui sont dans un état linguistique trouble] but only to immediately dismiss them because, according to him:

these are not the populations that win out. In all known clear cases, a group of Indo-European languages results from the spread of a language with expansive strengths and which then belongs to a population having nationalist sentiment and conscience of their individuality.

[ce ne sont pas ces populations qui l’emportent. Dans tous les cas clairs qu’on connaît, un groupe de langues indo-européennes résulte de

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2 This first part returns to the main themes developed in my introduction Impression d’ensemble to the bilingual edition of Slawo-deutsches und Slawo-italienisches, in press. I am grateful to Andrée Tabouret-Keller, Katja Ploog, Didier Samain and Ralph Ludwig for having read and commented earlier versions of this text.

3 Upon publication, the work obtained the Prix Volnay from the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. For a more detailed study of the impact of this work in its time, see Andrée Tabouret-Keller: “L’intérêt suscité par l’écrit de Schuchardt”, (in press).

4 Text reproduced in the volume ‘Linguistique historique et linguistique générale’ (1958), which brings together the author’s articles published between 1900 and 1920.
l’extension d’une langue ayant une force d’expansion, et qui, par suite, appartient à une population ayant un sentiment national et la conscience de son individualité (1958: 105).

To finish, he concludes from his initial postulation that “what the history of language shows [...] are extensions of defined languages spoken by nations having self-awareness” [ce que présente l’histoire des langues [...] ce sont des extensions de langues définies parlées par des nations ayant conscience d’elles-mêmes] and continues by specifying that:

idioms which are shapeless mixtures of two different languages such as the Slavic-Italian and Italo-Slavic described by Schuchardt are those of inferior groups; they generally do not survive. But when they do, it is legitimate to wonder whether they can be theorized: the facts would be much too complicated. We would undoubtedly be faced with indeterminable kinships.

[les parlers qui sont des mélanges informes de deux langues différentes comme le slavo-italien et l’italo-slave qu’a décrits M. Schuchardt sont ceux de populations inférieures; ils ne survivent généralement pas. Au cas où ils survivraient, il est permis de se demander si l’on en pourrait faire la théorie: les faits seraient beaucoup trop compliqués. On se trouverait sans doute devant des parentés indéterminables (1958: 106).]

One can only be puzzled by such arguments, indicative of positions which, while recognizing the empirical reality of language mixing, nonetheless declare that one should not take into consideration the various levels of their existence (linguistic, social, anthropological, political) following dogmatic and ideological reasoning. These are positions which lead to denying the interest of these phenomena for linguistics and for furthering our knowledge of languages.5 An undercurrent of a sociological rather than a sociolinguistic order, in keeping with the then emerging Durkheimian notion of “collective conscience” (one must remember that Meillet was a contributor to *L’année sociologique*, the journal founded by Durkheim) is certainly one of the explanations.

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5 The perplexity does not so much concern the a priori hypothesis of considering the absence of fecundity of “mixings”; thus I owe to Jacques François his noticing that Schuchardt also said in his Inaugural Lesson in Leipzig that “[l]anguage bastards are as little inclined to reproduction as bastards from fauna and flora.” [Sprachbatarde neigen so wenig wie die Bastarde des Thier- und Pflanzenreichts zur Fortpflanzung], (Über die Klassifikation der romanischen Mundarten ([1870] 1900). The perplexity concerns the implicit pejorative assessment of speakers and the refusal to study the subsequent, attested “spawn”.
This implicit reference to Durkheim’s distinctions between ‘social’ and ‘psychological’ as well as between ‘collective’ and ‘individual’ may have led the scholar, moreover unanimously acclaimed, to reject these “languages which are shapeless mixes of two different languages” which he relegates to the status of anomy in the Durkheimian sense of consequence of social disorder.6 Thus, faced with phenomena so clearly grounded in empiricism, linguists have mostly argued over necessary categorical foundations, theorizing rather than building theories.7 In other words, before empirics, theoretical (but also surreptitiously ideological) preconstraints are already in place, and could illustrate another of Schuchardt’s remarks:

We face types everywhere indeed, but these types exist precisely only thanks to our a priori reasoning or thanks to external circumstances that have nothing to do with the matter itself; thus we have no right to consider them as centres of delimited territories.

[Typen treten uns ja überall entgegen, aber sie sind eben Typen nur dank entweder unserem Apriorismus oder äusseren Umständen die mit der Sache selbst gar Nichts zu thun haben; sie als Centren abgegrenzter Gebiete zu betrachten, dazu haben wir kein Recht.]

We have now reached the heart of the debate which I wish to broach with the example of the criticism of SDSI which appeared at the same time of many

6 Cf. Durkheim (1893), who notes, on the subject of the “moral and social sciences” that “they offer the spectacle of an aggregate of disjointed parts which do not work together. If therefore they make up a set without unity, it is not because they are not sufficiently aware of their resemblances; it is because they are not organized” [elles offrent […] le spectacle d’un agrégat de parties disjointes qui ne concourent pas entre elles. Si donc elles forment un ensemble sans unité, ce n’est pas parce qu’elles n’ont pas un sentiment suffisant de leurs ressemblances; c’est qu’elles ne sont pas organisées]; and then that: “since a body of rules is the definite form adopted over time by the relations spontaneously established between social functions, one could say, a priori, that the state of anomy is impossible wherever the necessary organs are in sufficient and sufficiently prolonged contact.” [puisqu’un corps de règles est la forme définie que prennent avec le temps les rapports qui s’établissent spontanément entre les fonctions sociales, on peut dire a priori que l’état d’anomie est impossible partout où les organes solidaires sont en contact suffisant et suffisamment prolongé.]

7 For an analysis of these questions I recommend the article by Baggioni (1988) devoted to the “débat Schuchardt—Meillet.” See also Nicolaï (2014a) which suggests implicit reasons seeking to “explain” the masking effect applied to Schuchardt’s approach to language mixing. In contrast, it is highly informative to read the seminal work which, based on studies on syphilis, L. Fleck ([1935] 1979) devoted to the elaboration of scientific facts and to the “socio-historical” constraints which contribute to their establishment.
other works—pioneering and well received—by Schuchardt on Portuguese-based creoles in Africa and Asia. Because it is indeed this somewhat forgotten work, having for explicit object the approach to Slavic-German and Slavic-Italian linguistic mixes, that was the focus of Meillet’s attack.

Today, apart from all related epistemological considerations as to the appropriateness of a realistic or anti-realistic scientific approach for grasping phenomena and building theories (or the reverse...), the more interesting question is this: the problem of language mixing—and therefore the positions taken by Meillet on this question (this notion?)—is it “outdated”?

With practical studies and conceptual developments on language contact strongly affirming themselves and in full expansion, some may wonder whether the wealth of information with which SDSI is generously endowed remains of interest for contemporary specialists working in these linguistic domains of overlapping and mixing between Slavic, Germanic and Romance languages. Perhaps. Perhaps others, today and in the past, will not realize the generalist and theoretical importance of this approach. Perhaps.

However, even though we live in a time where massive digitized databases and highly mathematical modelizations to process the data are being created, and although the question of language contact appears to have transmuted into an academic field, reading and pondering SDSI appear to me to retain their full significance; both because the work exemplifies a contextualized and finely detailed approach, and because it is a model of rigor and familiarity with the specificities of the examples it covers. Thus, in my opinion, yes, it is worthwhile taking an interest in SDSI.

One may easily add other reasons to the above. First of all, coming back to this text sheds full light on its modernity and radicalism, both well hidden behind the apparatus of heavy dialectology, which are no longer favored by current work modalities and mindsets (and thus, when it is not ignored, this work tends to be marginalized in the representations of many linguists today); then, because despite the quantitative and qualitative importance of current work on the effects of language contact, it is uncertain—today as much as a century ago—that the notion of ‘mixing’ and the perception of the theoretical and methodological consequences of taking it into consideration are fully apprehended in all the dimensions that SDSI acknowledged and retained.

Therefore, before moving on to the comparison of various contemporary approaches with the perspectives introduced in his work, the following presentation—and which, 130 years after the publication of SDSI, one could just as well interpret as a delayed review of a forgotten work, recontextualized for the current era—will contribute to better apprehending some of the constants in the debate.
1.1 General Perspectives

From the outset, SDS1 is a work which destabilizes. It overturns standards because, although it is usual to pay scholarly tribute, it is rare within the framework of the tradition to produce a work of such density and length. It was written for the 70th birthday of Franz Miklosich, a Slovene linguist who, in 1848 at the time of the “Spring of Nations” was engaged in favor of the Slovene cause, and convened the meeting which gave rise to the “Vienna Literary Agreement” and who held the Chair of Slavic Philology at the University of Vienna for nearly 40 years. The work’s style caused quite a stir. The writing is in one block, like the oratorical flow of a public speech, rhetorically presented as addressing the recipient of the homage. There are no chapters to structure its parts, no headings to lighten the density of the contents, no bibliographical references. The authors abundantly quoted in the text are identified solely by surname (very rarely preceded by a first initial) as if, like in a discussion among two colleagues, their identification were obvious; on a practical level it is indeed the only condition which can justify not providing the details of the references quoted. And, in a way, this was in fact the case. Stylistically, it is a letter, though of an unusual length, to a friend and peer. A letter written 130 years ago. But those 130 years are more than sufficient for the remembrance of many of the authors to have been lost. And what is true for the authors is just as true for the toponyms, many of which have been changed over time.

8 The Vienna Literary Agreement is a document signed in 1850 by two Serb writers, Vuk Karadžić and Đuro Daničić, five Croatian men of letters, Ivan Mažuranić, Dimitrija Demeter, Stjepan Pejaković, Ivan Kukuljević and Vinko Pacel, and Franz Miklosich, following a meeting the latter had organized. The topic was the decision to unify the languages and writing systems in the area covered by the former Yugoslavia. It was a reaction to the authoritarian Hapsburgs who ruled over the Austrian Empire. Shtokavian was chosen as the norm.

9 And although it is true that of the some 230 people that Schuchardt evokes in his text by the simple mention of their surname, some do belong to the culture common to all linguists; some also belong to the Pantheon of figures that any “person of learning”—as he calls them—is supposed to know, it is even more true that a greater number do not (or no longer) belong to the references available to readers today. Either because time has erased their remembrance, or the specificities of their research (or ours) has put them out of reach. Or yet because, consultants, journalists, actors or others, these are not people destined for collective remembrance.

10 Because while one may hope that readers will not be put off by names such as Ragusa or Fiume, they may be by Feitching, Vis and Zara. Moreover, the description of so many localities, sometimes simple villages, can be trying indeed for anyone not specialized in dialectology. Thus the historical and geographical voyage entailed by this work may appear overwhelming for non specialists of these regions of Europe, for whom this is the first approach.
finds oneself plunged into the universe of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the free States, the Kingdoms of Hungary, of Croatia; in regions where Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Polish, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Croatians, Serbs, Italians, Romanians and other Friulians confronted, supported, challenged each other; where Roman, Germanic and Slavic tribes—as Schuchardt calls them—both mingled and drew apart over the centuries.

However, as soon as one goes beyond the formal envelope, the geographic and historical foreignness, sdsi presents a wealth of reflection such that, far from being trapped in a seeming ivory tower (or an “intellectual ghetto”), it builds on a constant to and fro with the scientific, cultural and political world surrounding it, all while refusing allegiance to the \textit{Zeitgeist}. However, let us instead examine the contents of his work, his project and results, so as to grasp, behind the mask, its modernity.

1.2 \textbf{Orientation}

“There is no completely unmixed language” [Es gibt keine völlig ungemischte Sprache]. This well known aphorism which, rather than affirming the existence of language mixing (which would only be a truism), affirms the non-existence of non-mixed languages, is to be found in the first few pages of \textit{sdsi}. Schuchardt’s project is to stress the importance of and highlight this reality to draw conclusions for linguistics, without however neglecting its incidence on culture, society, psychology, education and politics. To achieve this end he examines everything observable, concrete and manifest in all the linguistic usages of the inhabitants and languages in contact situations under study. As was he wont, he developed a large network of consultants which enabled him to span the territory he chose to explore; his findings were further enriched by the study of all types of accessible written documentation, whether contemporary or from past centuries (literary works, press articles, etc.). This approach was of course also grounded in the existing literature on philology, dialectology and comparative linguistics. His approach was thus comprehensive, holistic, in that nothing of any possible use to his research was ignored\footnote{Moreover, the margins were always his favored field of exploration! They were always with him, and, incidentally, he returned to them in one of his final texts, colored with autobiographical overtones, where he confides: “And still now I believe I am seeing a raised teacher’s finger, which meant something like: even in your last days, can you not remain on the nicely ordered and fenced paths, do you not notice the sign which says it is forbidden to walk on the grass?” [Und auch jetzt noch glaube ich einen erhobenen} and he refused to be limited by any \textit{a priori} margins, whether in the study of empirical phenomena or in his theoretical framework.
1.3 Proposals

Thus what Schuchardt highlights with his rich material is the existence of ‘language mixtures’ as primary data, essential for grasping language dynamics and transformation. Mixtures whose affirmed existence, as specified above, articulates a postulate based on empirical findings provided by the attentive study of what is called today ‘the field’. Indeed, he attempts to show that mixing can be discerned in the very language and usage of individuals, and all the more so in socialization and usage codification, up to its impact on a language’s formal structure, its “inner form” [inneren Sprachform], as on the materiality of the units which compose it. Of course he does not proceed by applying an explicit methodology, such things were not of his time, nor any predefining elicitation protocol, but—and his texts insist on this point on several occasions—by careful and constant attention to the quality of his sources, whether they be writings or consultants. He always specifies their origin and assesses their reliability (for example: “Apart from these [...] documents, I had access to other ones that I considered as more reliable, insofar as they had been most carefully collected from life speech in Trieste and Capodistria by Mister G. Vatova [...].” [Ausser diesen [humoristisch-phantastischen] Documenten lagen mir andere vor die ich mit grösserem Vertrauen benutzen konnte, indem sie von Herrn G. Vatova zu Triest und Capodistria aus lebendem Munde sorgfältigst gesammelt [und mit ausführlichen Bemerkungen begleitet] worden waren.], or, in contrast: “All the above mentioned sources, although of highly different values again, fail to reach the degree of reliability wished by a linguist.” [Alle die genannten Quellen, obwohl unter sich wiederum von höchst verschiedenem Werthe, entbehren jenes Grades von Zuverlässigkeit welchen der Sprachforscher wünscht], etc.)

Indeed, many of his facts on the importance and relevance of language mixing are summarized from the beginning through various strong proposals drawn from the analysis of his data. Proposals which, even today, can upset the linguistic representations of many specialists, not to mention many


A critical approach which he always used. See also Ploog (in press) for similar remarks on Schuchardt’s assessment of the quality of his sources for Negro-Portuguese Creoles.

In Nicolaï (2014a: 232–242) there is a more detailed comparison between the research themes broached by Schuchardt and contemporary orientations of linguists exploring language contact.
ideologists more or less well versed in linguistics. To mention but a few: “The possibility of language mixing has no boundary on any side” [Die Möglichkeit der Sprachmischung hat nach keiner Seite hin eine Grenze], a statement with which many specialists of language contact today are in complete agreement,14 or yet “even within a language considered as completely uniform, we find mixing. The so-called analogy phenomena find their origin just there.” [selbst innerhalb der als vollkommen einheitlich aufgefassten Sprache finden wir Mischung. Die sogenannten Analogieerscheinungen sind aus solcher hervorgegangen.]

In other words, if one considers that Schuchardt’s assertions are founded, then, for one of the tenets of historical linguistics, the question “what is transmitted?” remains subjacent, but unanswered as, in this context, Meillet’s “continuation” does not answer it. As for scholars of general linguistics, traditionally more or less focused on “the study of a language in and for itself” [l’étude de la langue en elle-même et pour elle-même]15 as they were at the end of the 19th century, the crucial question of the homogeneity of the object of study is a “given”. Thus Schuchardt’s notion of ‘mixture’ is beyond their scope. One sees that when Schuchardt posited the principle of ‘mixture’ as constitutive of all languages, it was a provocative proposal for most of his colleagues.

One can also of course recall other proposals. For example: “Each individual learns and modifies his language in the relation to a range of other individuals. This general and persistent language mixing hinders the formation of significant differences within one relational group.” [Jedes Individuum lernt und modifiziert seine Sprache im Verkehr mit einer Reihe von anderen Individuen. Diese allseitige und unablässige Sprachmischung hemmt innerhalb einer Verkehrsgruppe die Bildung bedeutender Differenzen.], or yet “In our brain lives together an infinite world of language representations, each of which is connected to many others in very different ways. The strength of these connections is subject to steady change, which produces numerous and profound alterations in the language itself.” [In unserem Gehirn lebt eine unendliche Welt von Sprachvorstellungen, deren jede mit vielen anderen in verschiedenartigster Weise verknüpft ist. Die Stärke dieser Verbände befindet sich in einem steten Wechsel und dadurch werden zahlreiche und tiefgehende Änderungen in der Sprache selbst hervorgerufen.]

14 Thus Thomason (2000: 173–182) notes on several occasions that “from a linguistic viewpoint any and all contact-induced changes are possible.”

These observations, which would not be disavowed by a sociolinguist from this century, do not refer to the limited functionalist account devoted to the “desire to be understood by those to whom one speaks” [souci d’être compris de ceux à qui l’on parle] which Meillet noted in Schuchardt, because the relevancies they imply are already recognized by contemporary sociolinguistics. Of course it is also not a case of hailing Schuchardt as the father of sociolinguistics—which he is not. It is also not a case of making him a field linguist, which he is not. In contrast, it turns out (without there always being a direct link of parentage) that the questions he asked have come to life and have developed in certain sociolinguistic traditions with linguists such as Hymes, Gumperz and other adepts of interactional studies and of an ethnography of communication. The questions also raise the issue of code-switching which, emerging in the 1980s (Poplack 1980, 1988), has become a rich field of investigation over the past 30 years.

Similarly, approaches being developed by linguists such as Matras (2009) on bilingual repertoires, and Heine and Kuteva (2005) on ensuing grammaticalization echo the questions he raised. Lastly, it also appears that the problems he tackled are of interest to many contemporary linguists, such as Van Cœtsem (2000) and Winford (2007) who explore linguistic change induced by contact, and process and theorize the notions ‘source language / recipient language’, ‘agentivity’, ‘imposition’, ‘directionality’, etc.

1.4 Apprehension
As noted above, Schuchardt drew his proposals from an empirical approach and the detailed study of linguistic phenomena and communication situations. He refused to preconstrain his approach in the Procustean bed of the mindsets of his time without prior critical assessment. Thus, far from the beaten path, it is through an unexpected, though concrete, academic angle that he begins the presentation of his study of language mixing: the exploration of how literature, both high and low, render the speech of bilinguals, whether from choice or necessity. He writes:

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16 He did however know how to organize sojourns in the countries he was interested in, of the length necessary for studying the language and the customs of their inhabitants!

17 However, this is not enough to entertain the absurd thought of Schuchardt as a “proto-cognitivist”! Especially as his individualistic bent would have had great difficulty agreeing with trends which are often of a hegemonic nature.
An object I have been thinking of for a long time has attracted me away from the main street. Foreigners speaking a broken language have often been appearing in the dramatic literature of all times and of all peoples.

[Durch einen Gegenstand welcher mir seit langer Zeit im Sinne liegt, habe ich mich von der breiten Strasse abseits locken lassen. Radebrechende Ausländer kommen in der dramatischen Litteratur aller Zeiten und Völker sehr häufig vor.]

His approach thus, from the outset, puts plurilingualism and its consideration at the heart of his study. He uses all productions to illustrate ways of speaking—“gibberish” of non native speakers who do not perfectly master the language of their work or daily lives, i.e. pastiches of language use, mocked in theaters [einem Bühnenkauderwelsch (!)], in narratives, journalistic caricatures and others. His interest covers everything written in texts, with or without an intent to mock. His references are provided e.g. by 15th century works on Grecian-Italian, Slavo-Italian and Serbo-Italian illustrated by the Venetian Andrea Calmo as well as Calderón, Cervantes, Molière, Shakespeare or Lessing in how they portray the speech of the Stranger. Obviously he did not omit the press of his time and explored what he called the Czecho-German jargon [Tschecho-deutschen Jargons]; “Kitchen German” [Kucheldeutsch], often mocked in burlesque theaters in Prague and Vienna, in the satirical press; the Slavo-Italian of Trieste and elsewhere. This does not mean he reduced contact and the effects of contact to such situations, he also recognized psychological, social and political specificities and differences in how language is used at linguistic crossroads or in various enclaves, areas where one also finds “tenacious resistance” to mixing (“But in general here the resistance has been a very tenacious one.” [Im Allgemeinen aber ist hier der Widerstand ein sehr zäher gewesen].)

That being said, Schuchardt was first and foremost a linguist. Through the materials gathered from his consultants and the critical review of all available works, he very concretely, and as exhaustively as possible given the available data, systematically examined phonetic changes, lexical borrowings, syntactic structure modifications, potential or attested word orders depending on to what extent a given language permits displacement, inflections of verbs, adjectives, nouns, the behavior of the various types of pronouns, case, and prepositions. In other words, everything languages do which exemplify and attest to the reality of language mixing. In fact it is partly the detail of this long and meticulous work, precise and scholarly, which makes SDSI difficult to read for those who lack the prerequisite knowledge of the languages and issues. His focus is both on the materiality of forms and on what he calls the “inner form”
of languages, considering moreover that “[t]he most interesting kind of language mixings is no doubt the one that unfolds through the inner form of the language.” [Die interessanteste Art der Sprachmischungen sind ohne Zweifel die welche vermittelst der inneren Sprachform vor sich gehen]. Which has meaning for those interested in the phenomena of grammaticalization.\textsuperscript{18}

I have certainly gone beyond what is normally expected of a “critical review.” Especially of a work 130 years old! But, as I have stressed from the beginning, the work is exceptional, and thus deserves exceptional treatment. Moreover, the most important is yet to come: to justify my length by comparing Schuchardt’s view of language mixing as presented in \textit{SDSI} not only to current approaches to language contact and dynamics (hardly surprising), but also with approaches which I will gather under the heading of ‘semiotic dynamics’ (certainly more surprising); and to do so by examining the \textit{actors of communication} — the “parleurs”\textsuperscript{19} [speakers] as Schuchardt could have put it (1884: 129)— in the transformation process that they instantiate.

1.5 \textbf{Perspectives}
To understand what is shared by these approaches, let us compare the conceptual framework of Schuchardt’s perspective on language mixing (or at least my representation of it)\textsuperscript{20} with that of ‘semiotic dynamics’ as presented in several of my earlier works (Nicolaï, 2011, 2012a). These two approaches entail a same interest in the \textit{activities} of individuals and groups (communication actors, “parleurs”, etc.) who, in their ordinary usage, produce and transform languages. Thus the framework of semiotic dynamics introduces conceptualizations, obviously developed independently of the process which \textit{SDSI} exemplifies, but which, despite differing trajectories, intersects with it. It is this intersection which justifies my assertion as to the work’s modernity and the usefulness of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Cf. Heine and Kuteva (2005: 116) who mention Schuchardt in connection with spontaneous grammatical replication.
\item \textsuperscript{19} In French in the text.
\item \textsuperscript{20} On the point of our representations, I will reiterate my remark (Nicolaï [2008] in press) insisting that they are always “predetermined by values, centers of interest... let us say the “imagination” of the one who, in the \textit{hic et nunc} will construe them” [prédéterminées par les valeurs, les centres d’intérêt... disons “l’imaginaire” de celui qui, dans le \textit{hic et nunc}, va les élaborer] ... but noting that “this process is ‘normal’ and probably necessary for the elaboration of scientific thought, because the latter cannot integrate a dimension of historicity in its development.” [ce procès est ‘normal’ et probablement nécessaire dans l’élaboration d’une pensée scientifique, car celle-ci ne peut pas ne pas intégrer une dimension d’historicité dans son développement.]
\end{itemize}
reviewing it. At the same time, this review broadens the scope of research and reflections in this field.  

In both cases, one posits that the (continuous) language and linguistic production actualized by communication actors results from the elaboration of continuously reworked contextually available material, which entails a permanent process of systematization, anchoring language in time and constantly updating norms, as suggested in the above quotations from Schuchardt. What is interesting here is that the reworked material can consist of what I like to call a language and linguistic “reconstruct”, which can stem from a single linguistic resource (i.e. from the same “language” in the lay sense of the term), but which can also (unexceptionally) stem from different linguistic resources (i.e. stem from several “languages” in contact). The transformed object-language resulting from this process is thus above all determined by the specificities of the resource at a given point in time. In correlation—and very classically—the transformations it attests to also appear to depend on: (i) the nature of the structural patterns affected by the process; (ii) the general cognitive principles which we moreover all share as humans; (iii) the contextual normative choices made in the hic et nunc in reference to past practices (bringing historicity and connotations into play). This means that, from this perspective, there is no stigmatization around the issue of ‘mixing’, nor are its primary data considered suspect. Instead, they are considered natural and ordinary, and are de facto integrated. Schuchardt appears to be broaching the subject of his presuppositions in noting:

I cannot consider the verdicts against language mixing drawn from the essence of language as having force of law; my argument is, as already said, that the conception of language here in use as an independent organism governed by hard laws appears as an unacceptably one.

[Die gegen die Sprachmischung aus dem Wesen der Sprache selbst geschöpften Verdicte kann ich nicht als rechtskräftig ansehen; weil mir, wie schon oben gesagt, die dabei verwertete Auffassung der Sprache als eines unabhängigen, von festen Gesetzen regierten Organismus eine unannehmbar zu sein scheint.]

21 In counterpoint, I will look into the justified (or not) propensity of scholars and documenters to consider a priori the objects-languages with which they work as constitutively homogeneous entities, albeit subject to modification and transformation by a (contingent) contact situation. The problem which is then posed concerns on one hand what I have called the ‘scandal’ (cf. Nicolaï, 2014a: 221)—in the sense of ‘cognitive dissonance’—created by affirming the legitimacy of ‘mixing’ as an object of study and, on the other hand, the ‘scandal’ of affirming its universality and normalcy.
Of course he was countering the organicist approach current at the time; nonetheless, one could very well replace ‘independent organism’ by ‘structure’, ‘system’, ‘entity’, or any other term referring to a unit always perceived / given as homogeneous and even essential.

2 In the 21st Century Contemporary Horizons

Let us come back to the present and begin by specifying the distinction between ‘mixture’ and ‘contact’ and its presuppositions before explaining the concepts which I propose in counterpoint to Schuchardt’s approach.

2.1 Mixing and/or Language Contact

What are the relations between the notion of ‘language mixing’ as I have identified it in Schuchardt and that—much better established in current times—of ‘language contact’? First, contrary to ‘mixing’ which posits a state considered in its own right, the notion of ‘contact’ opens the field to the understanding of interaction across languages or between distinct linguistic components. The two notions are obviously linked, but the phenomena are not located at the same level of conceptualization, nor are they apprehended at the same time. Even if it were studied concretely, it would still show evident structural instability or a lack of normative rigidity, exploring the notion of ‘language contact’ (pre)supposes exploring modifications bearing on linguistic entities, one could say “languages”, a priori considered lacking a structural identity and/or grounded symbolism. This is, of course, nothing more than a presupposition, but it is well known that presuppositions always pre-determine the field over which they have scope, and do not cancel themselves out! Such a presupposition underlies not only structuralist and generativist approaches to language but also the ideological or utilitarian perception which one finds here or there. However, it can also be present in the background of other perceptions.

In contrast, as stressed elsewhere, highlighting ‘mixing’ tends to focus attention on the result, the “reconstruct” or, if one prefers, a reified reelaboration, considered a given, no more (cf. Nicolaï 2014b). One could then suppose that the ‘language mixing’ approach would treat static phenomena (languages observed in their structures as apprehendable results) whereas the ‘language contact’ approach, while not becoming a sociolinguistic approach, would still examine dynamic phenomena (taking into account and reifying the actors of communication as they are perceived through the transformation processes which they impose on their languages.)
And yet this is not the case in what I have retained here of Schuchardt’s understanding because, grounded in empirical detail, his approach posits, formulates and questions the dynamics inherent in all languages. It looks at the constant (and dynamic) link established between ‘communication actors’ and their languages and language in general. It suffices to return to Schuchardt’s observations and proposals to note that his approach to mixing never ceases its exploration of language dynamics, and to perceive that the linguistic forms he describes, although in effect for him objects which he aims to account for in the classic manner, are also the empirical ground justifying his general reflection on the language practices of communication actors (and therefore on the dynamics they call into play) and his articulation of these practices with the background matter of language which he relates to the notion of ‘inner form’.22

From this perspective, the notion of ‘language’ considered as a stable and homogeneous entity is dissolved because, in the end, everything is dynamic; this dynamic nature has become the structuring factor in the communication process, and is constitutive of languages and their development in the processes which link them to the individuals who speak them.

Let us lastly note that even though the notion of ‘language contact’ also entails dynamics, it is not necessarily of the same order. There is of course a dynamic which one is supposed to account for in apprehending cases of language contact, e.g. contact induced change. However such dynamics, taken for granted in empirical studies, are only described insofar as they apply to specific phenomena. Although obvious in the framework of a given description, its manifestation remains context-bound since it is only linked to the specificities of the case under study. In other words, and to summarize effectively—and logically—the approach to language contact shown by the majority of current publications accounts for linguistic transformations and dynamics bringing together the linguistic entities in a situation of contact, but this does not necessarily translate into their questioning the constitution of languages in general. This is perhaps the limit which bolsters the idea of the usefulness of something such as Contact Linguistics with a well defined field of study and its

22 The short quotations provided at the beginning of this article suggest and highlight this focus on language dynamics, communication actors and how they interact: “Jedes Individuum lernt und modifiziert seine Sprache im Verkehr mit einer Reihe von anderen Individuen. …” “In unserem Gehirn lebt eine unendliche Welt von Sprachvorstellungen, deren jede mit vielen anderen in verschiedenartigster Weise verknüpft ist. Die Stärke dieser Verbände befindet sich in einem steten Wechsel und dadurch werden zahlreiche und tiefgehende Aenderungen in der Sprache selbst hervorgerufen”, “Die interessanteste Art der Sprachmischungen sind ohne Zweifel die welche vermittelst der inneren Sprachform vor sich gehen”, etc.
own specificities, entailing a given field of application and its own “objects”; distinct from other types of linguistic research because of the particular nature of those objects!

What follows may seem a diversion, but it is important to look at additional themes which at first glance do not pertain to the field of language contact and mixing, but which, in the following section, will enable comparison with Schuchardt’s perception of the general dynamics of language. These are the ‘communication process’, the ‘actors’ of this communication, and of the ‘elaboration of meaning in context’. All of these notions can be subsumed, in another analysis framework, under what I have called ‘semiotic dynamics’ (Nicolaï 2011).

2.2 Communication, Communication Actors, Communication Framework, and Historicity

Very briefly, I will begin by specifying what I include under ‘semiotic dynamics’. This is a complex domain which concerns all activities whereby we make sense of the world around us including languages and, more particularly, all linguistic practices which we call upon to produce meaning. In this area, through our communication activities, it is our linguistic resources and interactional practices which are involved, regardless of linguistic boundaries.

In correlation, because of the dynamics which define it, this field is also where languages form and transform, where they are actualized and elaborated, but also where they deteriorate or restructure. Considered within this organizing (and delimiting) framework, ‘contact’ and ‘language mixing’ are no longer phenomena “inhibited or blinded” by analysis; their inclusion is obvious and thus they become—when necessary for explanatory purposes—functional factors to be retained to better apprehend and better understand the continuous dynamics of the production of meaning and language transformation which we partake in.

It is conceivable that the study of this domain entails modifying viewpoints, reconsidering the order of relevance and the elaboration or refinement of various well-known notions (or concepts?) which, here, become “fundamental”. I will therefore give a brief presentation of some of these, essential in this type of study, to highlight their conceptual proximity and affinity with certain aspects and certain “givens” in Schuchardt’s approach. As we shall see below, these notions are tightly dependent on the dynamic relations we have with our various means of exchanging, giving meaning and constructing significance in our ordinary lives. By focusing more on the functionalization of contact and mixing rather than on their deletion, they particularly concern the possibility
conditions of our linguistic practices and contribute to making our role in language transformation better understood, a role that Schuchardt had very well recognized and grasped. Which, in his own way, he illustrates without ambiguity in SDSI.

2.2.1 Communication, in General
First of all a trivial and “soft” notion: ‘communication’. Communication is manifested through the available materials-tools (including languages) which human actors actualize. In a situation of exchange, it develops through rules on functions and procedures which are always shared even though continuously reconstructed, applied in context to a set of stabilized representations which “make sense” for the human actors we are. These representations are informed by past usage and the remembrance of their functional effectiveness in prior communication activities. In consequence, like operating rules and procedures, they are continuously transformed. This means that communication as an object of study entails establishing an entire phenomenology which takes into account all the dynamics which make it possible. These dynamics, above and beyond their linguistic interest, call into play all scientific fields which pertain to us as human individuals whenever the aim is expressing and understanding meaning and its production.

2.2.2 Communication Actors
Let us consider that, as human subjects, we are the ‘actors of communication’ and that the usage / activities linked to this fact are so essential that it conditions the emergence of “objects”—languages, symbols, etc.—which enable us to carry out our “semiotic work” in its ordinary dynamics and to function as communicating humans.

It is therefore important to clarify and explain the notion of actor. Those I term ‘communication actors’ are all who, whatever the level and finalities of their actions, communicate, exchange, and in doing so, use their languages,

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23 By ‘phenomenology’ I denote a set of phenomena which are usually considered separately in their matter and usage, but which, for theoretical purposes, I have chosen to group together through more or less tight links between them. ‘Phenomenon’ is what I term any manifestation which can be the object of analysis and/or description. In other words, I consider it a neutral term, with the meaning usually attached to it in physics. That being said, a phenomenon is always part of a given ‘phenomenology’ which of course has nothing to do with either Hegel’s nor Husserl’s philosophy. See also Hacking (1983: 221): “A phenomenon is discernible. A phenomenon is commonly an event or process of a certain type that occurs regularly under definite circumstances.”
modify their communication tools, including languages as well as attitudes and physical behavior. They act on the tools, assess them and, at times, distance themselves from them by characterizing and/or describing them, whether in accordance with institutionalized methodologies or ad hoc, through practices which are non legitimized but nonetheless constantly emerging and operating in the hic et nunc. The actors are thus linked to the material they use and transmit to the extent that they actively leave a mark (whether consciously or not) through their individual usage.

Thus, in the domain of language, based on their ‘sayings’, on ‘already-saids’, along with all contexts, they recognize, validate, appropriate sayings and ways of saying which can over time come to life as representations adapted for the exchange and appreciation of signs within a communication framework which is always shared. In this process, they are also determined by necessary and constant reference to prior linguistic usage. This reference, in its link to the remembered history of practices, creates the ‘represented norms’ to which they refer through the elaboration of the ‘interactional norms’ which they actualize to enable the development of the semiotic dynamics of which they are the obvious vectors.

Looking more closely into detail, we will postulate that, with variable weightings, they simultaneously play two essential social roles: that of ‘lay actor’ and that of ‘regulator actor’. The term ‘lay actor’ applies to actors’ functions and roles within a given “community fabric” which they actively contribute to weaving, in actualizing and carrying out their communication activities (and therefore using their languages) without including any conscious metalinguistic or epilinguistic distantiation. Concretely speaking, they stabilize linguistic forms through shared intersubjectivity without any explicit reflexivity.

In correlation, the term ‘regulator actor’ applies to the roles of actors who may be functioning as documenters, linguists, grammarians or other censors or assessors—legitimate or not, professionals or not—who develop reflexive attitudes expressive of a distant view of usage, systems, representations, which

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25 In former publications I have used the terms ‘secular’ and ‘regular’ actors, under influence from the French. I believe these new terms are clearer.

26 I prefer the term ‘community fabric’ (notation which focuses on the “texture”, the structure, how relations are organized) to ‘linguistic community’ (notation which focuses more on segmenting, on borders) (Nicolaï 2011: 78).
for them are both intellectual constructs and the matter used to express their views. These actors analyze, interpret, apprehend, develop and at times provide insight into the (representations of) linguistic phenomena they construe, identified and/or chosen based on a given set of features taken as indicators and/or stigmata, as well as a few rote rules learned, adapted, formulated, posited.

One must note that the distinction between lay and regulator actors is not a split, since it is a case of social functions and/or rules which are not mutually exclusive, but are necessarily willingly undertaken by human subjects. Thus communication actors centered on their roles of regulator actor are also lay actors given they speak and communicate. In parallel, communication actors focused on their role of lay actor are also regulator actors because they cannot but have an opinion (assessment) of their productions and those they are confronted with because this opinion (assessment) is integrated in the strategy and in the process of creating meaning out of what is interactionally exchanged through language and discourse27 or any other communication practice. This specific articulation is operational and necessary to grasp the dynamics behind language transformation, the level of reflexivity which determines the dynamics and the meaning-creating processes they substantiate (cf. Nicolaï 2011: 95, 2012a: 300, 2014b: 50–51 for previous mentions of these roles.)

In other words (to continue the conceptual clarification), contrary to the widely accepted and supposedly “obvious” notion of an ideal speaker-hearer which is in fact a fiction, if not a caricature, used to justify apprehending language as a product, as an *ergon*, the notion of actor takes into account individuals’ behavior in their process of apprehending and elaborating language as *energeia*28... within a naturally socialized space. Another rephrasal is: through

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27 Recognizing the distinction between ‘lay’ and ‘regulator’ actors highlights the natural and effective strategies in ordinary communication usage; at another level, as a notion retained and explicitly defined in our arsenal of descriptive notions, it becomes an artifact applied to phenomena, an analytically informed representation, a distinction which can be used in the process of apprehending and understanding such practices. But the concept (notion?) is of course not the phenomenon.

28 In this of course I refer to Humboldt’s view, which I only grasped later, after having conceptualized by own theoretical approach: “*Language, regarded in its real nature, is an enduring thing, and at every moment a transitory one. ... In itself it is not a product [Ergon], but an activity [Energeia]. Its true definition can therefore only be a genetic one. ... In a direct and strict sense, this is the definition of speech on any occasion; in its true and essential meaning, however, we can also regard, as it were, only the totality of this speaking as the language ([1836] 1999: 49)” [Die Sprache, in ihrem wirklichen Wesen aufgefasst, ist etwas beständig und jedem Augenblicke Vorübergehendes. ... Sie selbst ist kein
their roles, communication actors *act*. They have strategies, backgrounds and participate (knowingly) in the process of language transformation, of specifying linguistic forms and creating meaning. Their activities are visible, but they also show activism—not in terms of any ‘political project’, but rather in the actualization of intentional dynamics which obviously depend on the context of their actualization. To finish, they *operate* simply through their continuous interaction with the world around them to reach their communication aims.

### 2.2.3 Heterogeneity and Variation

That being said, whether in the lay or regulator roles, actors never operate independently of empirical support. Their language usage is actualized in relation to the functionalization of linguistic ‘heterogeneity’ and ‘variation’; these are two phenomena which were widely recognized by dialectologists well before the advent of sociolinguistics, and which all human actors are well aware of, as evidenced by their metalinguistic, epilinguistic or simply playful activities.

This means that in our linguistic practices there is a dynamic of continuous differentiation as manifested in context, which is born out of—and in—contextualization and which can be brought into operation for any particular purpose in ‘communication frameworks’ where communication actors actualize and “manipulate” language. Communication frameworks are also variable, and actors can either impose or passively identify them, or, more actively, redefine them, whether through interaction or not, depending on the moment, the conditions, the project behind the exchange and the discourse setting.

Constitutively, one thus perceives in languages, as they are used and reified by the users and descriptors, the permanence of this heterogeneity (in regards to the possible ordinary preconceptions concerning the systematic representations which we may have of them and communicate to others) and the permanence of variation (as regards the possible ordinary preconceptions we may have as to the necessary unicity of its designation.)

### 2.2.4 The Communication Framework

By ‘communication framework’ I mean the space of “knowledge”, linguistic, social, and cultural rules and norms shared by communication actors to enable effective exchanges, wherein communication is supposed to happen without
any major distortion in the meaning of what is transmitted. In practice, the communication framework is predefined by the speaker, who takes into account all situational variables in the *hic et nunc* within his meaning transmission project. We redefine it interactionally or not, depending on the situation, conditions, goal of the exchange and discourse settings.29

The framework can be ‘posed’ or ‘presupposed’, ‘open’ or ‘closed’; it may be established ‘*de facto*’ or ‘*de jure*’; it can be ‘given’ or ‘imposed’. It is also characterized by what I will call its ‘scope’, understood as the effective limit beyond which there is no longer any guarantee of proper transmission of meaning nor clear understanding of what is exchanged in a given context. Furthermore, to the extent that it must be recognized and interpreted, and that it can be ‘negotiated’, the communication framework is functionalized in and through interaction, of both speakers and listeners who, for their part, recognize, seek, find—or do not—significance in the proposed utterance.

After the fact, I noted that the notion of communication framework is not without affinities with the notion of ‘situation’ as presented by Gardiner (1932), and, earlier, by Wegener30 who, in 1885—which is to say at the time SDSI was published—proposed a theory of the speech act31 considered as an action focused on the predication process which is actualized in and through...
communicational exchanges. It is also clear that at another level, and in reference to pragmatic works which are now classics, this notion of communication framework is present in the background of many contemporary approaches such as those on implicatures or the identification of language acts. Similarly, from a more sociolinguist approach, it is behind (among other studies undertaken in the 1970s) the interactional approach established by Gumperz (1979), as well as e.g. the study of rules governing insulting matches as studied by Labov (1972).

2.2.5 The 'Retention of Historicity'
With the term 'historicity' mentioned above on the subject of communication actors, I am simply placing myself at the point where we include ourselves in our communication of time T through the retention of the characteristics and specificities—even if through reconstruction—remembered from communicational experiences of time at T-1.

Historicity—which is not "individual" memory—is the social construct grounded subjectively and intersubjectively, with which we are surrounded. It is part and parcel of our apprehension of the world and our interpretation of signs; it preconstrains the communication process, marks our usage, marks forms, is inscribed in language. In the domain of language alone, it underlies the continuous processes of the transformation of meaning which necessarily take into account the contextualization of their state in the hic et nunc and the perception, at once individual and social, of their former representations. It is thus developed through ordinary linguistic usage and is partially the result of such usage. But because it depends on human actors, it always presupposes a process of reframing and transforming previously used signs, which are recontextualized and refunctualized each time. And, just as much as the data of

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32 On this subject, let us recall the work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1997 [1950]) concerning the social construction of memory: "It is not enough to reconstitute piece by piece the image of a past event to obtain a memory. This reconstruction must be based on shared data or notions which are present both in one's own mind and that of others, because they constantly pass from one to the other and inversely, which is only possible if they belong, and continue to belong, to a single society. Only thus can one understand that a memory can be both recognized and reconstructed." [Il ne suffit pas de reconstruire pièce à pièce l'image d'un événement passé pour obtenir un souvenir. Il faut que cette reconstitution s'opère à partir de données ou de notions communes qui se trouvent dans notre esprit aussi bien que dans ceux des autres, parce qu'elles passent sans cesse de ceux-ci à celui-là et réciproquement, ce qui n'est possible que s'ils ont fait partie et continuent de faire partie d'une même société. Ainsi seulement on peut comprendre qu'un souvenir puisse être à la fois reconnu et reconstruit (1997: 63).]
the code and language, stable in memory and supposed to be known to all and considered objective, this concerns all types of presuppositions, shared routines, provisional patterns inductively (re)elaborated in context.

Based on this, one can then understand the notion of ‘retention of historicity’: it is the process which, through the constant reminder (belonging to the “implicature”) of the underlying “already-encountered-already-produced-in-a-given-previous-context”, connects individual or collective subjects to their world, objectivizes (and/or reconstructs) what is produced and—based on this reminder—gives meaning to the matter in the present.

Let us further note that at another level of actualization (that of the theory of knowledge) the same notion of ‘retention of historicity’ is happily akin to that of ‘thought collective’ [Denkkollektiv] that the Polish doctor-biologist and sociologist Fleck introduced in 1935 in connection to his approach to syphilis. He noted that:

Such historical and stylized relations within knowledge show that an interaction exists between that which is known and the act of cognition. What is already known influences the particular method of cognition; and cognition, in turn, enlarges, renews, and gives fresh meaning to what is already known. ([1935] 1979: 38).


The interactors we all are in our ordinary communicational usage (as in our practice of elaborating meaning) are also the safeguards and transmitters of this historicity which, through its retention, recollection and references to it, continuously inscribes the effect of what has come to pass in our epistemic constructions, in our behavior and in the elaboration of what is unfolding; contributing de facto to the creation of meaning... and a dynamic of attribution of meaning within the communication frame which is operating at the moment T of our activity.

2.2.6 Overview
I will finish with these conceptualizations in remarking that, in counterpoint to our practices in using the linguistic tools available to us, one easily notes on the part of communication actors (throughout their regulator and lay social roles) the durability—at times underground—of interest just as much in their creation and the modalities of their implementation as in their description.
Therefore there are no tools (materialities or representations, etc.) which would be simply “given.” As I have attempted to show, these tools, which exist de facto, only do so because actors continually (re)construe them, manipulate them, transform them, use them in ordinary social interactions in their personal and collective lives. There is then a dynamic link manifested between these tools on one hand, and the actors on the other. This link presupposes both the activity of these actors and the specificity of the situation (in the sense of Wegener) in which the activity develops.

From an epistemic perspective, this obviously does not imply that one must steer clear of traditional systemic descriptions which “forget” the presence of actors (such a process requires all our attention and there is always a “system” somewhere!), but instead simply implies that what is described (or is to be described) is not transcendental as such and that the (potentiality of) description itself would benefit (benefits) from being—reflexively—construed as an integral part of the epistemic context punctually presiding over its implementation.

3 Conclusion

But is there always a “system” somewhere? I do not know whether there is always a system somewhere; however there is always “systematization” in our usage and apprehension of our objects, tools, and environments (and therefore in the apprehension of our “languages”...). In other words, when there is no system, we tend (attempt) to create one. In correlation, once we have created one, we seek to adhere to it. Here the connection to Fleck’s notions of ‘thought collective’ [Denkkollektiv], mentioned above, and the related ‘thought style’ [Denkstil] is fully relevant. Two important notions for the philosophy of

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I would certainly have spoken here of “objectality” if it were not so linked to psychology and psychoanalysis.

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One also notes that this approach is not without ties to the conceptual background which led to the development of the notion of emergent grammar (cf. “The notion of Emergent Grammar is meant to suggest that structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse in a ongoing process... Its forms are not fixed templates but emerge out of face-to-face interaction in ways that reflect the individual speakers’ past experience of these forms, and their assessment of the present context, including especially their interlocutors, whose experiences and assessments may be quite different”. Hopper (1998: 156), and even 1987).

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And we do this either “individually”, which opens to collective non-recognition, or “collectively”, which enables legitimation within the shared societal space we partake in.
science which are known to have contributed to inspiring Kuhn’s vision of the ‘paradigm’.36

Consequently, in our fields of “human and social sciences” the system (resulting from the systematization process) is a state which is construed and always reconstrued, functionalized, utilitarianized, represented, as a means of carrying out ongoing or projected activities. This is obviously not an initial reality where one must “decode” its organization,37 it is rather personal data, linked to ‘evidences’ in the particular sense I give to the word (Nicolaï 2012b: 62–64).38 For a given level of analysis, and contrary to “compounds” which constitute—and retain—the system, the entities given as its components are its primary units (whatever the nature and degree of complexity of these entities); even if, at another level of analysis, the system can also be brought to function itself as a primary unit in another apprehension framework. (Re)composition based on what is given (us)—in all its diversity—is the ordinary process which we actualize and which contributes to inducing the unitary representations which may be retained a posteriori.

From there, and to conclude by coming back to the point I started from, I would say that ‘language mixtures’ are of course not the fantasized aberration that Meillet would have had them be. Then, as far as the phenomenon of ‘contact’ is concerned, I will conclude by positing that obviously, contact is always present and happens both across languages and within languages. I will also note that languages do not exist outside of language contact because, even in thought, attempting to conceive of them as “isolated” entities,
the fact that we are necessarily—and at the same time—regulator actors and lay actors in our (reflexive) relations to them, implies the existence of a process of distanitation which is visible in construing meaning, establishing usage and individual and collective representations, but which is also just as much a continuous transformation process of linguistic forms. Which is precisely the object of study that linguists on the “ground” tackle!

It is thus that I justify establishing this counterpoint (which could appear unfounded!) between Schuchardt’s study of ‘mixing’ illustrated by SDSI and ‘the elaboration of meaning’ which I introduce with ‘semiotic dynamics’: both are located within a defining framework where communication actors are essential in accounting for the dynamics of what surfaces and is transformed and where, moreover, there is no preconceived notion as to the intrinsic nature of the phenomenon to be grasped. Indeed, it is a posteriori that a phenomenon recognized as tentatively construed in context with “what’s at hand” is validated or not in the communication framework it partakes in.

To finish, I will conclude with three new aphorisms which broaden the perspective by placing us at the heart of the process underlying all communication dynamics, where languages are a major tool:

1) languages are always in contact, at least, with themselves... And we are both the vector and the necessary context.
2) The system is a necessity for understanding the world... And we construct what is necessary.
3) We “create meaning” by integrating our distance from the world.

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