

Book Review



Eitan Grossman, Peter Dils, Tonio Sebastian Richter, and Wolfgang Schenkel, (eds.), *Greek Influence on Egyptian-Coptic: Contact-Induced Change in an Ancient African Language* (DDGLC Working Papers 1. *Lingua Aegyptia*, *Studia Monographica* 17). Hamburg: Widmaier Verlag, 2017.

The issue of language contact between Greek and Egyptian is not new but remains relatively understudied. The book under review here constitutes a fine collection of articles relevant to the topic, with a wide range of issues dealing with language contact generally, and as promised, providing information on how Greek affected the Egyptian language more specifically. This latter theme is present in most of the articles, with many of the authors pondering whether or not Greek loanwords were really a genuine part of also the spoken language (Almond, Egedi, Grossman & Richter, Hasznos (including an interesting parallel to Greek loanwords in Syrian, p. 239), Müller, Oréal, Grossman & Polis, Funk, Bosson, Boud'hors, Shisha-Halevy, Behlmer), while some others concentrate on clarifying the language contact situation in broader terms, albeit always including the Greek effect (Bagnall, Quack, Zakrzewska). One author, Torallas Tovar, takes the opposite approach and describes Egyptian borrowing in Greek, a justified addition to the overall topic of Greek-Egyptian language contact.

The book consists of four parts. The articles offer interesting information on Greek influence in both the literary and the documentary genre, doubtless new to most readers. Perhaps slightly out of place, although tied in with the diachronic contact linguistic context Egyptian has, is the fourth part describing Semitic and Arabic loanwords (Winand, Richter) that entered Egyptian. While not strictly within the theme described by the title of this edited volume, they do however “conclude the story” of Greek-Egyptian contact, Arabic taking over as the first language of most Egyptians in the centuries coming after the Greek reign, and Semitic loanwords being already integrated into Egyptian before the Greeks came—this connection and timeline relating to the Greek contact is also indicated in the Preface the editors have composed. Here, I first

outline the contents of the book in general, and then focus on a few points more specifically.

The volume starts with a linguistic introduction (Muysken)—this, in fact, constitutes the first part of the book—which is excellent. Not every reader of this book will be aware of the general principles of the linguistic study of ancient languages. This introduction also includes some basic information on Egyptian, and its long history through various stages. It is absolutely necessary to be aware of the terminology used for the different stages of the Egyptian language to be able to read any linguistic studies on it. One of the issues Muysken takes up is the fact that since Egyptian has the longest known written history of any language in the world, it is an excellent target for research relating to long-term language change and variation. He is right to emphasise this, as this long history of documented language use also includes several long periods of language contact, with Greek, with other Semitic languages, and finally, with Arabic.

There can, indeed, be a lot to learn from this treasure of linguistic contact material, but Muysken also brings up the fact that not all authors connect their studies to the contact linguistic literature. While he concedes that this is not problematic, as the issues under study regardless remain contact linguistic in nature, it has to be said that a more unified approach in this might have made the book more easily accessible to the general linguist/typologist wishing to use the rich material provided by Egyptian as evidence for contact linguistic research. As such, the readership of this volume might be restricted to Egyptologists, as the lack of a general linguistic framework will no doubt make some of the studies more difficult to grasp without a working knowledge of Egyptian.

Nonetheless, Muysken's introduction to the different types of language contacts and especially his table on the typical language contact scenarios in the world's languages (5–9), to which he compares Coptic, will probably aid even those readers with limited (or no) knowledge of Egyptian. It will also contribute to the reading experience of the non-linguist Egyptologist/Classicist who needs the book for a better understanding of nonstandard language use such as presented in the various articles, especially frequent in documentary texts. Particularly useful is the explanation of the phonological integration of loanwords (7–8) which relates to the use of Greek infinitives, studied in depth by Grossman & Richter (207–236). The non-linguist, ancient-language reader will also benefit from the idea of a bilingual continuum, proposed by Muysken (10–11), that possibly stretched from societal bilingualism to literary bilingualism, two extremities with very different linguistic outcomes.

After the linguistic information, there follows the second part of the book, which is also somewhat introductory in nature. This section is devoted to giving