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On interdisciplinary studies of language contacts and contact-induced changes

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of language contacts and their outcomes. Contact of languages is viewed as a multi-facet phenomenon. The authors focus on the way researchers deal with contact-related issues in social sciences. The fields covered in the article include linguistics, psychology, sociology, culture and history. The interdisciplinary nature of language contacts is studied by comparing subjects of studies and theoretical approaches to dealing with contacts between languages and contact-related phenomena. The work is topical because it provides the insight into this field of investigation and helps to identify most disputable or neglected areas, which could become the basis for future developments and studies. The aim of the article is to give an account of how various academic disciplines interrelate in the study of language contacts and what problems researchers face and try to solve in their works. For this purpose, a systemic approach to the interdisciplinary analysis is used. The conclusion is made that more attention should be paid to the links between these fields, so that results in one domain can be compared with those in another.
Key words: language contact; interdisciplinary; bilingualism; borrowing; interference; pidgin; creole language; contact-induced changes.

Introduction. There hardly exist any "genetically pure" or "unalloyed" languages, because almost every language in the world has been influenced by other languages at one time or another. Such interaction between languages is called "language contact" and has become an object of interdisciplinary studies in linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology and other sciences. The branch of studies related to the contact of languages is often called the "theory of language contact" or "contact linguistics" (when in reference to linguistics).

Methods. This article is based on the systemic approach to the interdisciplinary analysis. Due to interdisciplinary approach we take into consideration the anthropocentric factor, linguistic and non-linguistic information, intercultural analysis.

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Results and discussions. Contact of languages is a multi-facet phenomenon, therefore it is considered from the perspective of various sciences. This interdisciplinary approach contributes to more accurate insight into the subject.

Linguists tend to focus on the issues related with mixture, interpenetration of two independent language systems. They usually concentrate on studying and analyzing issues related with finding out the following:

▪ the outcomes of contacts of languages at the phonological, lexical and grammatical levels;

▪ the way languages transfer structures or structural elements;

▪ the way a new language can emerge as a result of language contacts;

▪ outcomes of situations when two or more languages are used by a group of speakers, etc.

Contacts between languages result in various phenomena and cause "contact-induced changes". The contact may be "direct" or "indirect". In the first case it takes place in bilingual or multilingual speakers. In the second case the contact occurs without a direct contact of people through book learning. People who already know a foreign language transfer new words (loans) into literary works, religious books or dictionaries. Thus, other people who even don't speak foreign languages, learn new vocabulary of foreign origin from books and start using it. Currently mass-media, especially the Internet, enjoy dominance in this type of non-direct language contacts.

Sociolinguistic research focuses on resolving questions of linguistic importance, such as how language change comes about. The researchers observe and analyze interaction between speakers in multilingual societies. The outcome of language contacts varies in several parameters, such as the duration and intensity of contacts between the groups of speakers, the degree of similarity between the languages in contact and the functions that their communication performs in the society, types of social, economic and political relations between them, domination of one language over the other, etc.

Sociolinguistics is a very broad field, and it can be used to describe many different ways of studying language contact. Researchers may have rather different interests from each other and they may use very different methods for collecting and analyzing data. Sociolinguistics is about how individual speakers use language, how people use language differently in different towns or regions or how a nation decides what languages will be recognized in administration or education. Their aim is to answer the following questions:

▪ Who uses those different forms or language varieties?

▪ Whom do they use them with?

▪ Are they aware of their choice?

▪ Why are some forms or languages "getting a win" over the others? (And is it always the same ones?)

▪ Is there any relationship between the forms in flux in a community of speakers?

▪ What kind of social information do we ascribe to different forms in a language or different language varieties?

▪ How much can we change or control the language we use? (Meyerhoff, 2006: 3).

While the goal of works on contact linguistics and language variation within sociolinguistics has mainly been concerned with the understanding of how language operates in society, the crossroads of language contact theory with *psychology* has been, for example, in the theory of representation of languages in the mind of individual speakers. In comparison to purely linguistic approach focusing on language, researchers involved in the psycholinguistic aspect of language contact use a speaker-oriented approach. They are interested in how two or more languages are "stored" and function in the mind of a bilingual. In the psychological framework "individual bilingualism" is classified on the basis of the command of each language as "symmetrical" (good command of both languages) or "asymmetrical" (an individual is fluent in one language only). Some of the

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theories developed by psycholinguistics have been much criticized. For example, a problem of how languages are stored in a bilingual's mind. Until now researchers have not agreed on the number of "storage departments" for languages in a mind: one, two or three storages are suggested by different scientists (Ehri, Ryan, 1980, Kolers, Paradis, 1963).

Analyzing the speech of bilingual individuals, psychologists note, the formation of any language is not an isolated process. It is based on the previous experience of the individual. In acquisition of a new language individuals necessarily use their past linguistic experience of L1.

Much is unknown about the reasons why some people have better innate abilities to languages than others. It is not clear if the ability to switch from one language to another and the degree of interference that occurs have to deal with an innate ability or is the result of training (CONFEMEN, 1986, Boretzky, 2000, Daff, 2000). Psychologists working in the area of a second language acquisition also study the effect of bilingualism on the behavior of a person, the development of cognitive and individual features of character.

The problem of relationship between language and mind has been comprehensively discussed. Various studies of "the language picture of the world" have been carried out, and associative dictionaries of different languages have been created. All these studies contribute to better understanding of how people belonging to a certain culture perceive the reality. According to M. V. Zavyalova, each native speaker has a certain image of the world formed by his or her mother tongue and represented in the language by a semantic network of concepts characteristic of this very language. Not only associative experiments carried out by scientists, but even the difficulties arising in intercultural communication and translation prove this point. Therefore, researchers try to find out how two pictures of the world function in one mind and how two images of reality interact (Zavyalova, 2001: 60).

Special attention is also paid to the impact of nation-specific cultural traits on behavior and communication of speakers. Traditions, cultural values and idiosyncrasies all play an important part in every society. The outcomes of "cultural interference" manifest as cognitive conflicts arising from cultural differences between speakers' world views. Cultural interference means a "transfer of non-linguistic elements of culture and it can be compared figuratively with "cultural accent". A speaker may have a perfect command of a language but behave in a way that is considered "strange" or "rude" in a new cultural environment (Klokov, 2000: 47).

Since 1970-s Pidgin and Creole studies have come to be considered as important for the development of the linguistic theory. Pidgins and creoles are the results of intensive contacts between two or more languages and combine elements of these languages. The issues that are most studied in this field are:
- Pidgin and creole genesis
- Linguistic characteristics of pidgins and creole languages: morphological and syntactic structures, phonological features, vocabulary and sources of borrowing, semantic change of loans
- The nature of the relationship between pidgins and related creoles
- Development of creoles, lexifiers and substrate languages
- Post-creole continuum development, etc.

The genesis of pidgins and creoles turned out to be a controversial issue. Some linguists stick to the hypothesis that all the world's pidgins and creoles are derived from the same source. Usually they suggest a Portuguese pidgin that came into being in the 15th and 16th centuries. This approach is called "monogenetic theory". "The restricted monogenesis hypothesis is less ambitious. It is mostly limited to the English and French-lexifier creole languages of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean, and proceeds from the idea that there was a jargon or pidgin spoken along the coast of West Africa that later formed the

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primary source for a wide range of creoles. The common features of these creoles are then assumed to be due to these early pidgins" (Muysken, Smith, 1995:9). Others argue that a "polygenetic theory" of the origin of pidgin is more realistic. Another suggestion is that pidgins and then creoles emerge as a kind of "baby talk" or "foreigner talk" through imperfect second language learning or the reduction of speech directed at foreigners. For some supporters of this theory the possible similarities among the creole languages occur due to universal properties of the learning process.

Since the 1980s researchers in the field of pidgin and creole linguistics have increasingly been concerned with finding and analyzing written records as evidence of early stages of creoles. While motivated by questions on the genesis of creoles, such studies have contributed significantly to our insight into the historical evolution and the variability of these languages. For example, West African Pidgin English have received important historical documentation and analysis (e.g. Arends 1995, Baker & Bruyn 1999, Rickford & Handler 1994). Theoretically and methodologically most works on pidgin and creoles pursue the same aims by means of similar approaches.

Important progress has been made in many domains of language contact studies, including linguistic borrowing, interference, code-switching, areal convergence, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to give some insight into these phenomena.

Borrowing is inevitable language contact phenomenon. It is sometimes treated as similar to interference (in a broader sense) or as a separate phenomenon. To W. Mackey, it refers to "those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of the bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language in contact, i.e., as a result of language contact"(Mackey, 1968).Some researchers stick to U. Weinreich's understanding of interference as being any linguistic change caused by contact. According to him there are

two main mechanisms involved in contact-induced variations. The first mechanism is "borrowing" of linguistic elements of one language into another. The second mechanism is called "interlingual identification" of elements of two languages, when a speaker thinks that the elements are equal in both languages and transfer the elements of one linguistic system to the other (Weinreich, 1953: 31-32).

Borrowing "implies that one language takes something from another language and makes it into a permanent part of its own system. In contrast to the borrowing of an object from another person, the borrowing of a linguistic form or concept from another language is not implied to be temporary. This is one of the main differences between borrowing and *code-switching*. Borrowed forms or concepts are integrated into the borrowing language, while code-switching<…>implies the use of two or more different language codes within the same stretch of speech" (Meyerhoff, 2006: 1).

S. Thomason and T. Kaufman associate *borrowing* with situations of language maintenance and define it as "the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language" (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988: 37). *Interference* in their interpretation has to do with second language acquisition and language shift. But in the modern linguistics there is no consensus on how borrowing should be defined and distinguished from interference.

To overcome this situation F. Van Coetsem suggested an alternative classification for contact-induced changes which divides all phenomena into "borrowing" and "imposition". "If the recipient language speaker is the agent, as in the case of an English speaker using French words while speaking English, the transfer material from the source language to the recipient language is borrowing (recipient language agentivity)". If "the source language speaker is the agent, as in the case of a French speaker using his French articulatory habits

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while speaking English" the transfer material is "imposition" (Van Coetsem, 1988: 3).

Nevertheless, this approach is rarely used by researchers. R. Hickey thinks that the term "imposition" denies the use of the intuitively more obvious "transfer" which is a disadvantage", in other respects the approach initiated by F. Van Coetsem has distinct merits, such as his highlighting of the relative linguistic dominance of languages. This can best be illustrated by an example. Consider the position of English and Spanish in the south-west of the United States, especially in the large urban centres such as Los Angeles. First, Spanish influenced the English of the Chicanos, then after some time, the type of English they developed had a reverse influence on their Spanish because for many their English has become more dominant" (R. Hickey, 2010: 27).

It should be noted that the intensity and the content of borrowing depend on specific *historical circumstances*. The intensity of influx of lexical borrowings vary on different historical stages. It is a well-known fact that most linguistic variations take place in the times of significant changes in the society. The Age of Discovery which refers to the era's phenomenal advances in geographical knowledge and technology was one of such crucial events. The expansion of European countries into other continents and colonization of indigenous people was the main reason for the spread of European languages on new territories. In the new environment European languages underwent the process of vernacularization, many new words and notions were added to their vocabularies. At the same time indigenous languages started to borrow words and notions from European languages and culture. When we know extralinguistic facts (history in this case), we can trace the correlation between these important events and the clusters of new vocabulary entries in a certain language.

Intensive borrowings occur due to trade, political or cultural relations between countries. Even war and conflicts activate borrowing process. It means that irrespective of being positive or negative for the society, such events trigger borrowing of new words and realia (Baghana, Khapilina, Blazhevich, 2014:20). The only way a society can resist borrowing is using the policy of linguistic protectionism or purism. J. & L. Milroy distinguish between two types of purism: sanitary purism ('verbal hygiene') and genetic purism. While sanitary purism considers that the corruption of language may be caused by vulgarity or error, genetic purism locates the corruption of language only in the effects caused by other languages through the processes of co-mixing and hybridization (Milroy, 1985: 22-23). Icelandic is one of the best known examples of linguistic purism in action. Hundreds of earlier Danish and German loans have been purged and never been used since then.

Conclusion. Whereas important progress has been made in a number of domains of language contact studies, such as linguistic borrowing, interference, code-switching, areal convergence, pidgin and creole languages, etc., less attention has been paid to the links between these fields, so that results in one domain can be compared with those in another. That is why interdisciplinary approach contributes to more accurate understanding of the nature of contact-related phenomena, and scholars working on the problem of language contact tend to stay informed of the recent developments in related areas.

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