Ling 97r: Language Contact and Bilingualism

Spring 2016, first session
Class: Thursday 3-5pm, Sever 209

Office hours: Tuesday 10-11am, Boylston 303, or by appointment

1. Course description

Languages do not exist in a vacuum - instead, they are in constant contact with each other. Most humans are exposed to more than one language in their lifetime, and most countries have more than one language spoken on their territory. Therefore, a legitimate question to ask is - how does language contact affect the languages involved?

The aim of this tutorial is to investigate the broad array of phenomena that arise when languages come in contact with each other. In such situations, both the way the languages are spoken and the way they are represented in the minds of the speakers undergo a lot of changes, many of them dramatic in nature.

How does the sociolinguistic situation and speakers’ attitude affect the outcome of the language contact situation? What happens to language proficiency of the speakers in a language contact situation? How does it affect long-term language change? Can language contact give rise to a new language, or lead to language attrition? These are the questions that the tutorial will address.

Studying language contact - both the theory and case studies - allows the students to have a bird’s eye view on a particular language contact situation, and focus on some aspect of it that they find particularly interesting - sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, or diachronic. Comparing the language contact situations allows one to identify the linguistic features that are most prone to change and those that are most resistant, as well as make conclusions about their representation in the human mind.

Prerequisites:

2. Course Requirements

Class participation - 20%

Your class participation is an essential part of the course. Please make sure you come to class on time, well prepared, with the readings complete, and ready to contribute to the discussion.
Problem sets - 30%

There will be three problem sets, based on the readings and the linguistic phenomena discussed in class. Late submission of assignments is penalized (unless there is a note from a physician); 5% is taken off the total mark for the assignment for each day it is overdue.

In-class paper presentation - 20%

Each class participant is required to give a ~20 minute presentation of a research paper on one of the topics discussed in class. Ideally, the paper should be related to the topic of the final project. Please meet with me to confirm your paper choice; I can also help you select a paper for presentation.

Final project - 30%

For the final project, you are required to write a ~5-8 page essay investigating a linguistic phenomenon from the point of view of language contact. The choice of the phenomenon/language is yours, but you are required to meet with me by Week 5 to finalize the topic of your project. The final paper is due a week after the final class.

3. Weekly schedule (subject to revision)

T&K = Thomason & Kaufman, 1988
B&R = Bhatia & Ritchie, 2012

NB: Readings for a given week to be read before that week’s class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings (italics = recommended)</th>
<th>P-sets</th>
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| 1 Feb. 4 | Language contact situations  
Borrowing vs. interference  
Lexical vs. structural changes | T&K, ch. 1 & 2  
Thomason, 2000 | P-set 1 handed out |
| 2 Feb. 11 | Language areas  
Code switching | Ferguson, 1959  
Thomason, 2000  
B&R, ch. 13 | P-set 1 due |
| 3 Feb. 18 | Language mixing  
Bilingualism: scenarios and outcomes | B&R, ch. 1  
Thomason 2001, ch. 8 | P-set 2 handed out |
| 4 Feb. 25 | Heritage languages  
Language attrition | Polinsky & Kagan, 2007 | P-set 2 due |
| 5 Mar. 3 | Pidginization & creolization | Thomason 2001, ch. 7  
Arends, Muysken & Smith 1994, ch. 1-3 | P-set 3 handed out |
| 6 Mar. 10 | Language planning and language revitalization | Marshall, 1991 (sel.)  
Wright, 2003 (sel.) | P-set 3 due |
| Mar. 17 | Final paper due | | |
References


