How Languages Borrow Morphology

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Borrowing is a process whereby one language (the **recipient** language) adopts (transfers) some elements from a different language (the **donor** language) in a situation of **language contact**, i.e. a sociolinguistic setting including speakers bilingual in both languages.

Roadmap

- a brief history
- examples of morphological borrowing
- factors and parameters
- a case study of verbal prefixes

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The study of linguistic borrowing has traditionally focused on **lexical** borrowings.

The very possibility of **morphological** borrowing was either rejected, or the few known cases were treated as marginal and theoretically irrelevant.

"The common consensus among historical linguists has always been that morphology – in particular inflectional morphology – is the grammatical subsystem least likely to be affected by language contact. The most popular explanation for this fact has been that foreign elements cannot easily make their way into the inflectional morphology because its tightly interconnected paradigmatic structures form a barrier." (Thomason 2015)

Antoine Meillet (1866-1936):

"il n'y a pas d'exemple qu'une flexion comme celle de *j'aimais, nous aimions* ait passé d'une langue à une autre"

(*Linguistique historique et linguistique générale*. Paris: Champion, 1921, p. 86)
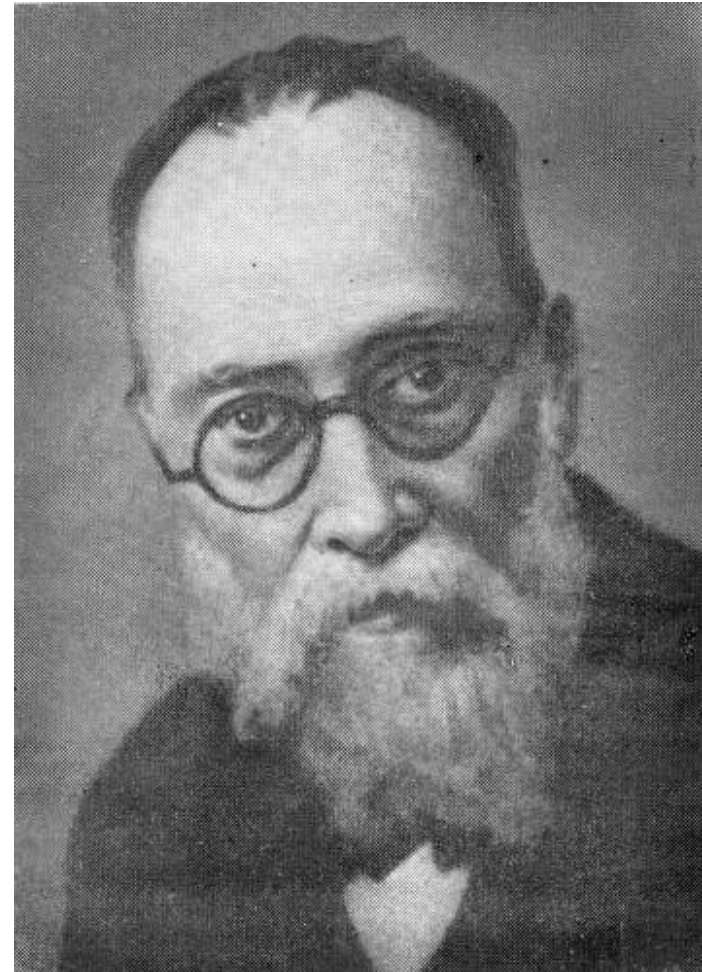
Edward Sapir (1884-1939)

"... direct historical testimony as we have gives us no really convincing examples of profound morphological influence by diffusion"

(*Language. An Introduction to the Study of Speech*, 1921, Ch. 9)

However, already by the time Meillet and Sapir formulated their rather categorical statements, uncontroversial examples of inflectional borrowing had been known to (some) linguists (e.g. Dawkins 1916 description of Cappadocian Greek).

Einar Haugen (1906-1994)

"Structural features ... are established in early childhood, whereas the items of vocabulary are gradually added to in later years. ... the more habitual and subconscious a feature of language is, the harder it will be to change."

(The analysis of linguistic borrowing. *Language* 26.2 (1950), p. 224)

Uriel Weinreich (1926-1967)
Languages in Contact (1953)

The foundational study of language contact based on extensive empirical data.

Weinreich 1953:

"the transferability of morphemes is considered as a correlate of their grammatical function in the source language and the resistance of the recipient language" (p. 31)

"The transfer of morphemes which are strongly bound as inflectional endings in many European languages seems to be extremely rare." (ibid.)

"morphemes with complex grammatical functions seem to be less likely to be transfered by the bilingual than those with simple functions" (p. 34)

"The fuller the integration of the morpheme, the less likelihood of its transfer." (p. 35)

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Examples of borrowed morphology

"International" affixes in the European languages:

    English *-age*, *-able*, *-ize*, *de-*, *ex-* etc.

    Lithuanian *-izm(as)*, *-istik(a)*, *anti-* etc.

NB such affixes are able to combine with native roots, e.g. Eng. ***de****frost* or Lith. *davatk**izmas** < davatka* 'hypocrite'

Examples of borrowed morphology

Such "international" affixes have initially made their way into the recipient languages as parts of words containing them. The fact that these affixes were factored out and became productive is due to the large number of borrowed Latin and Greek words and primarily to the fact that whole **derivational paradigms** rather than isolated words have been borrowed.

Examples of borrowed morphology

An important property of "international affixes" is **transparency** in both form and content:

- clear and unequivocal semantics;

- unity of form and clear segmentability.

Examples of borrowed morphology

"International inflection"?

    English. *focus* ~ *foci* < Latin

            phenomenon ~ *phenomena* < Greek

            cherub ~ *cherubim* < Hebrew

    German *Genus* ~ *Genera* < Latin

            Lexikon ~ *Lexika* < Greek

    Polish   *muzeum* ~ *muzea* < Latin

Examples of borrowed morphology

- peculiarities of inflection "imported" together with borrowed lexemes ("parallel system borrowing", Kossmann 2010);
- not only do not affect the native vocabulary, but often tend to be replaced by regular native models in colloquial styles;
- often have low formal transparency.

Examples of borrowed morphology

Suffixes of active present participles of modern Standard Russian:

Church-Slavonic (South Slavic) *-ašč-*, *-ušč-* instead of East Slavic *-ač-*, *-uč-*.

NB Russian dialects do not know such forms.

Examples of borrowed morphology

The borrowing of participial suffixes became possible due to the following factors:

- the early loss of productivity by the native Russian participles in -*ač*, -*uč* and their lexicalization as adjectives (cf. *let**uč**ij* 'able to fly' vs. *letj**ašč**ij* 'flying' < *letet'* 'fly', *gorj**ač**ij* 'hot' vs. *gorj**ašč**ij* 'burning' < *goret'* 'burn');
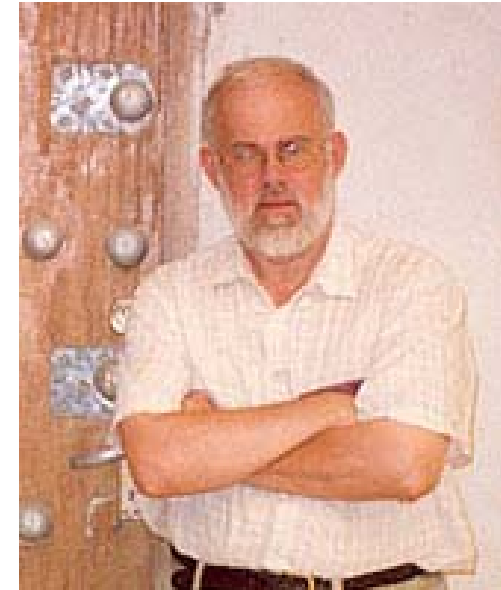
Examples of borrowed morphology

- the long period of Russian-Church-Slavonic **diglossia**, which has facilitated the transfer of Church-Slavonic forms into the literary language, where the participles were most actively used;

- the high degree of **congruency** between the morphological systems of the donor and the recipient languages, which has facilitated the expansion and "nativization" of the Church-Slavonic suffixes.

Examples of borrowed morphology

Jeffrey Heath
Linguistic Diffusion in Arnhem Land. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1978.

Examples of borrowed morphology

Ngandi (Gunwinyguan) < Ritharngu
(Pama-Nyungan)

-*dhu* Ergative-Instrumental

Ritharngu < Ngandi

-*kaʔ* Dual of kinship terms

Examples of borrowed morphology

The peculiarities of the sociolinguistic situation in precolonial Northern Australia (Heath 1978):

- small tribal communities;
- strict patrilocal exogamy (husband and wife must be speakers of different languages; wife joins the husband's tribe);
- members of the community are bi- or multilingual from childhood.

Sociolinguistic situations of this type, if stable for a long period of time, facilitate structural convergence between the languages involved (cf. a similar situation in the Vaupés region in Amazonia, described in Aikhenvald 2002), including **metatypy**, i.e. major grammatical restructuring (Ross 2007).

Examples of borrowed morphology

Eugeni V. Golovko

Nikolai B. Vakhtin

Mednyj (Copper Island) Aleut
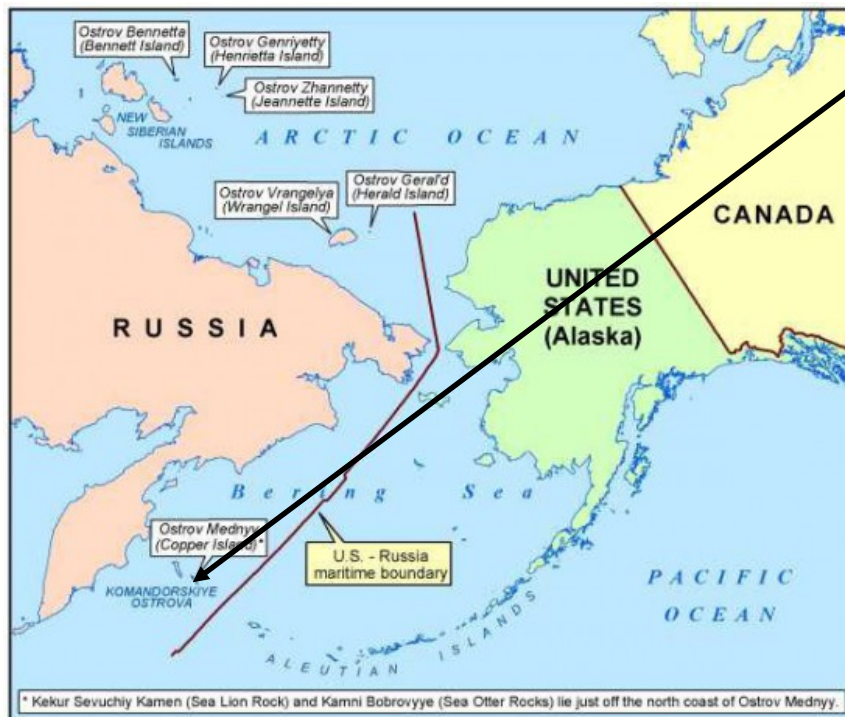
Examples of borrowed morphology

(Golovko & Vakhtin 1990):

the verbal inflection and a large number of lexemes in Mednyj Aleut are borrowed from Russian, whereas the remainder of grammar (including verbal derivation, cases and major syntactic structures) is Aleut.

Examples of borrowed morphology

taana-x̌   *ni-buud-ish*   *ukuu-t'*

land-ABS   NEG-AUX-PRS.2SG   see-INF

'You won't see the land.'

uku-xta-l-ya   *ula-m*   *uluyaa*

see-RES-PST-1SG house-OBL   red

'I saw a red house.'

(Sekerina 1994: 22, 24)

ABS - absolutive case; AUX - auxiliary; INF - infinitive; NEG - negation;
OBL - oblique case; PRS - present tense; PST - past tense;
RES - resultative; SG - singular

Examples of borrowed morphology

Such "bilingual mixed languages" (other known cases are Media Lengua, Michif, Mbugu) emerge in very specific sociolinguistic situations characterized, first, by asymmetric bilingualism, and, second, by the creation of the **new identity** of an ethnolinguistic community, whose sign is the new mixed language.
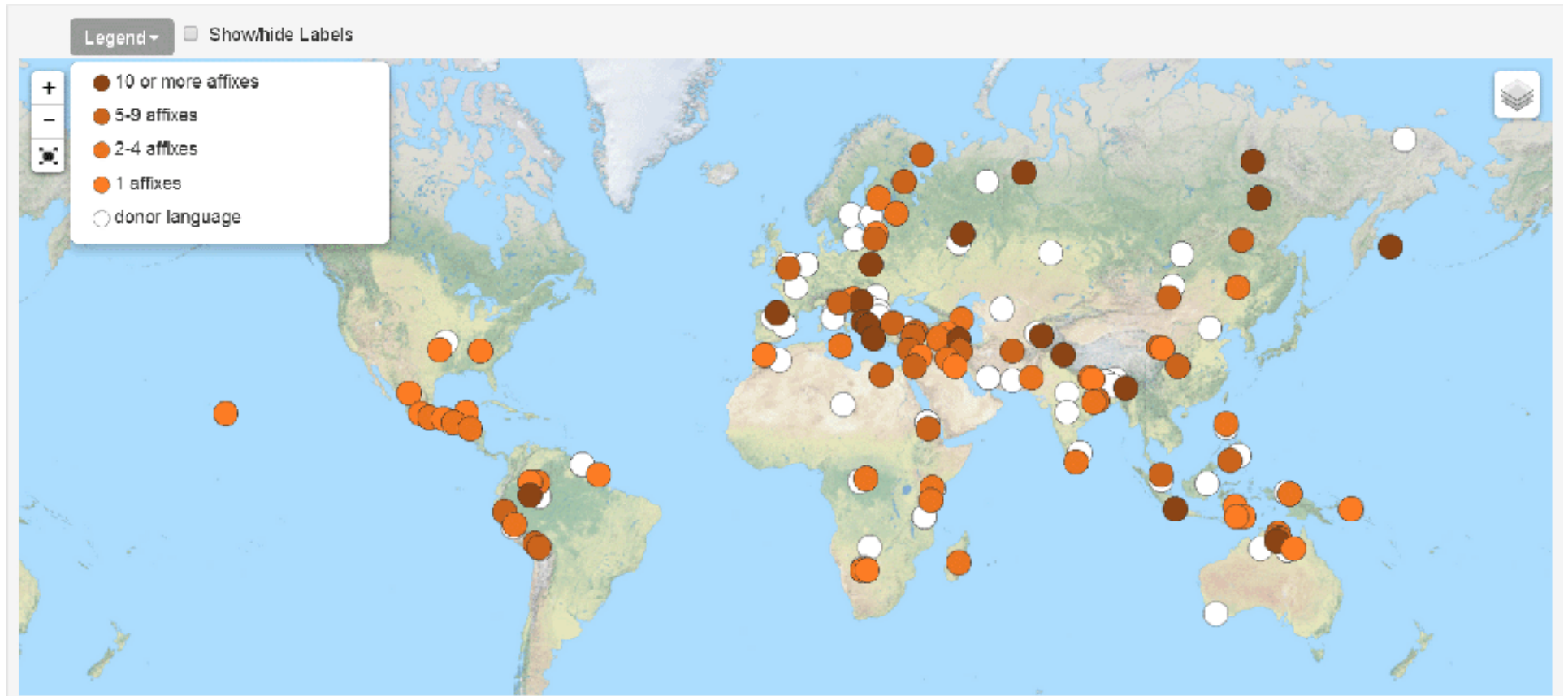
Examples of borrowed morphology

Frank Seifart (EVA-MPI, Leipzig) 2013:

AfBo: A world-wide survey of affix borrowing

http://afbo.info/

Foto © Udo Meinel

Examples of borrowed morphology

Examples of borrowed morphology

Affix function	total number of borrowed affixes	number of languages that borrowed affixes with this function
Search	Search	Search
subject/object indexing	60	10
nominalizer: agent	51	26
verbal TAM	51	17
nominal derivation (miscellaneous)	50	12
adjectivizer	46	19
noun class (inanimate)	45	3
nominalizer: abstract	39	12
nominalizer: miscellaneous	35	16
diminutive	34	16
number: plural	27	14
verbal derivation (miscellaneous)	21	9
case: non-locative peripheral case	20	10
numeral classifier	16	2
gender (human)	11	6
verbalizer	11	8
definite/indefinite	10	5
clause-level TAM	9	5
nominalizer: social group	9	7

"[T]here is no global dispreference for morphological diffusion. In certain types of contact situations, even inflectional morphology passes readily from one language to another. ... the diffusion of inflectional features is considerably more common than one might guess from the general language-contact literature" (Thomason 2015)

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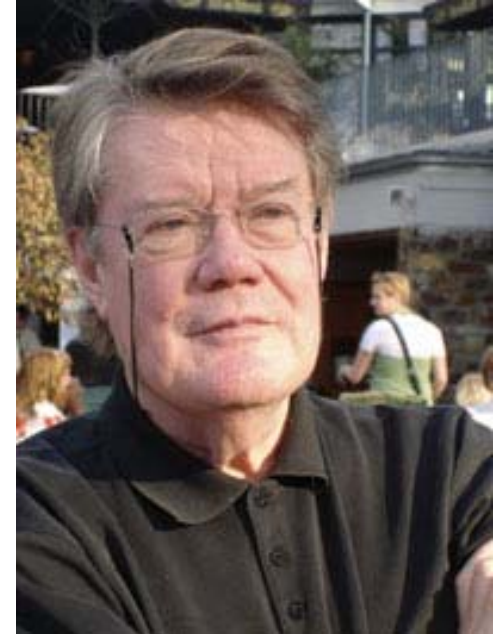- a case study of verbal prefixes

Factors and parameters

Morphological borrowing is determined both by structural as well as and primarily by sociolinguistic factors.

Factors and parameters

Lars Johanson

An integral model of
code-copying.

Factors and parameters
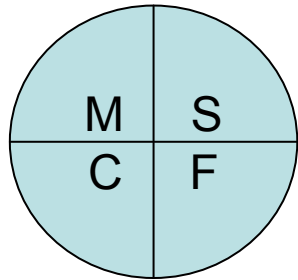
Properties of linguistic elements:

- material properties (substance)

- semantic properties

- combinatorial properties

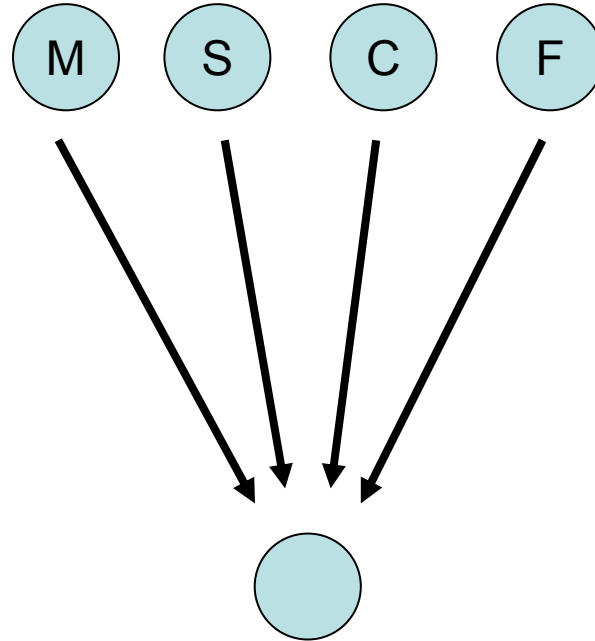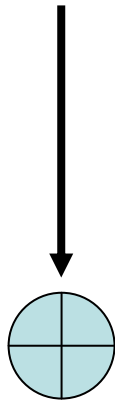- frequential properties

Factors and parameters

global copying   vs.   selective copying

model
code

basic
code

Factors and parameters

Yaron Matras & Jeanette Sakel (eds.) 2007: *Grammatical Borrowing in Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Factors and parameters

MAT(ter)-borrowing: "direct replication of morphemes and phonological shapes from a source language" (Matras, Sakel 2007: 829)

PAT(tern)-borrowing: "re-shaping of language-internal structures" when "it is the patterns of distribution, of grammatical and semantic meaning, and of formal-syntactic arrangement .. that are modeled on an external source" (ibid.: 829–830) without transfer of phonological substance.

Factors and parameters

Joshua Fishman (1926-2015).

Language maintenance and language shift as a field of inquiry. *Linguistics* (1964), 2(9).

Factors and parameters
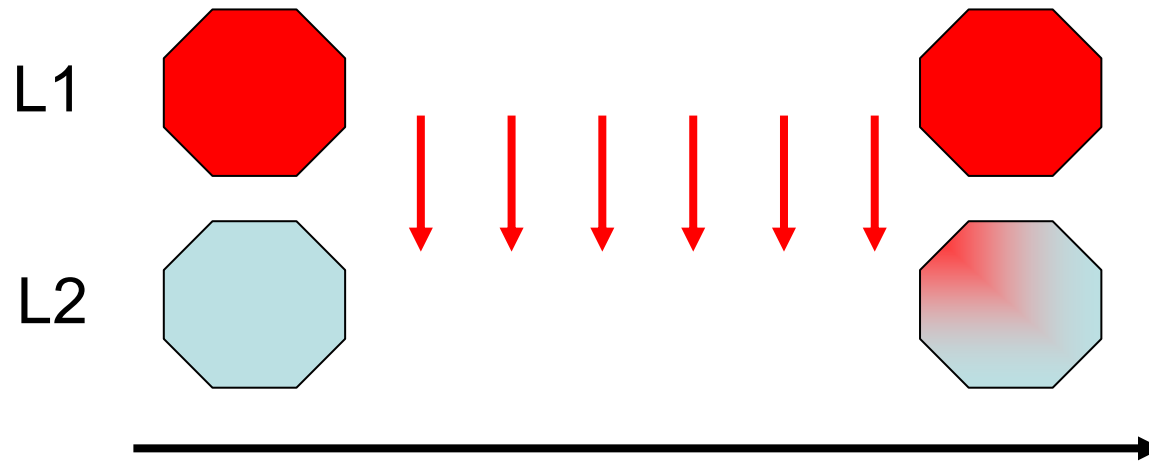
Maintenance of L2 with influence from L1: lexical and, under a high degree of influence, grammatical borrowings from L1.

Factors and parameters

L1

L2
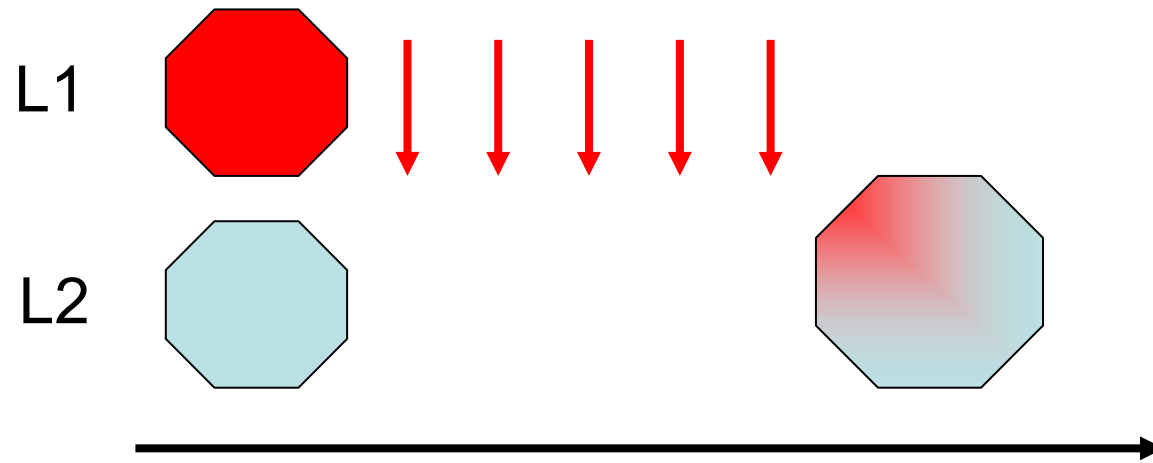
Loss of L1 and **shift** of its speakers to L2; depending on a variety of factors, a degree of substrate or superstrare **interference** of L1 in L2.

Factors and parameters

Types of borrowing correlate with types of language-contact situations.

Sarah Grey Thomason &
Terrence Kaufman (1988).
*Language Contact,
Creolization, and Genetic
Linguistics*. University of
California Press.

The first integral analytical
model of contact-induced
language change.

Factors and parameters

- MAT-borrowing primarily occurs in situations of language maintenance;

- by contrast, for language shift situations, PAT-borrowings from substrate/ superstrate languages are characteristic due to the imperfect learning of the dominant language, while MAT-borrowings may be rare or altogether lacking.

Factors and parameters

Many contact situations cannot be unequivocally described as language maintenance or language shift:

"[I]n many or most shift situations, borrowing and shift-induced interference occur simultaneously, mediated by different agents; and it is not always possible to determine which process(es) has/have produced a given innovation." (Thomason 2015: 29)

Other important sociolinguistic factors:

- the relative numbers of speakers of languages in contact;
- dominance relations between speaker communities and languages;
- age of bilingualism: children vs. adolescents vs. adults;
- the degree of language proficiency;
- the role of language and its elements in the construal of identity;
- etc.

Structural factors

- transparency and biuniqueness in form and function of linguistic elements;
- typological congruence of structural systems of the languages in contact;
- "functional gaps" in the recipient system which may be filled by the elements from the donor language;
- etc.

Structural factors

Francesco Gardani.

Borrowing of Inflectional Morphemes in Language Contact. Peter Lang, 2008.

Structural factors

"**[I]nherent** inflection, i.e. the inflectional categories which are more similar to derivation, such as aspect, tense, mood, gender, number and inherent cases (72,3%), is borrowed far more frequently than **contextual** inflection, i.e. person and structural cases (27,6%)." (p. 84, emphasis mine)

Structural factors

The hierarchy of linguistic factors in morpheme borrowing:

- categorial clarity (100%)
- semantic fullness (90%)
- sharpness of boundaries (70%)
- monofunctionality (70%)
- reinforcement (45%)
- filling of functional gaps (20%)

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A case study:
borrowing of prefixes and verbal aspect

- For more details see Arkadiev (2015: 232-257), Arkadiev (submitted)
- Data: influence of Slavic and Baltic verbal prefixes (preverbs) on contact languages (Romani, Yiddish, Livonian etc).

MAT-borrowing of preverbs

Wholesale borrowing of Slavic and Baltic preverbs in Romani varieties and Livonian.

MAT-borrowing of prefixes

North Russian Romani

Source: http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/maps/map13.gif
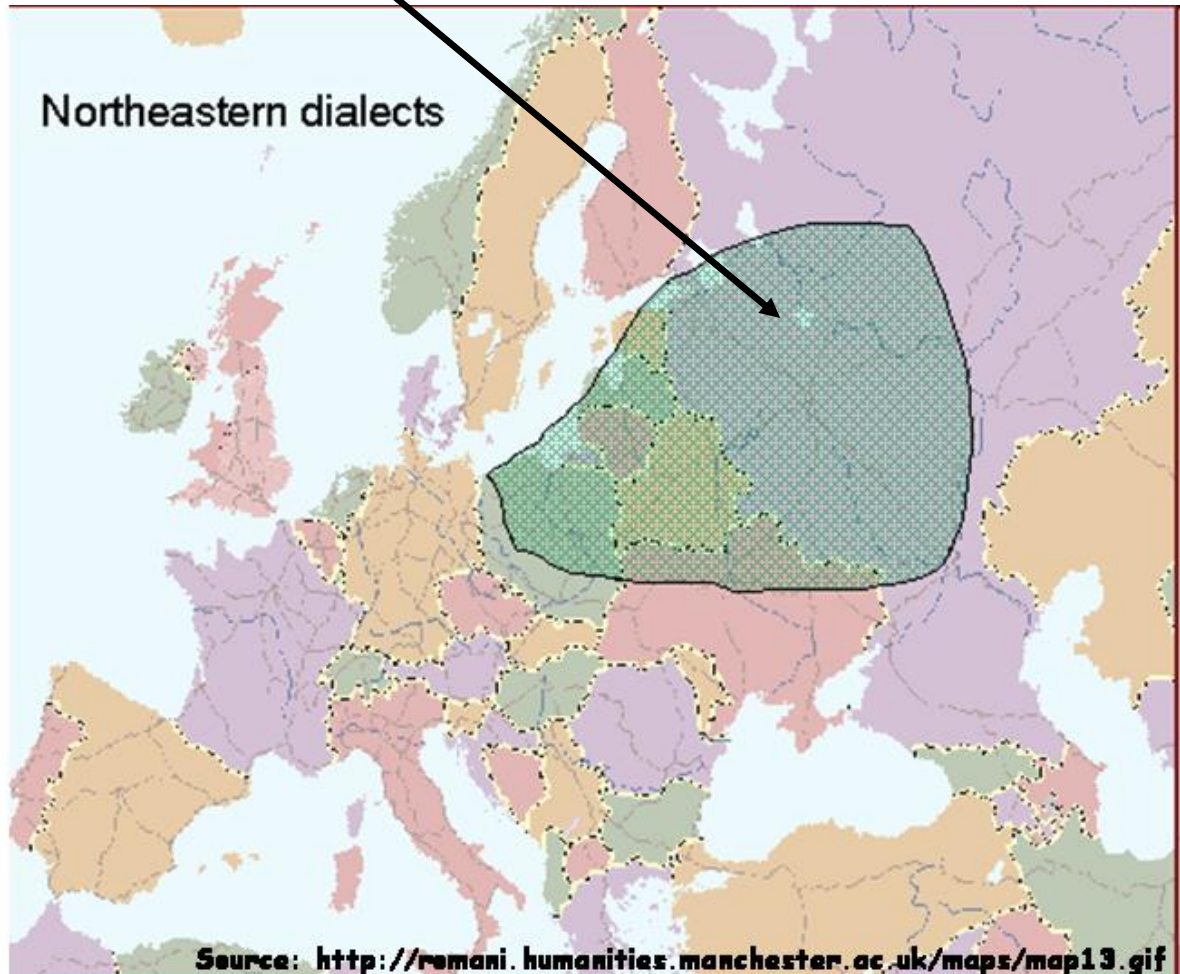
MAT-borrowing of prefixes

Rusakov (2001: 315-316)

"lexical prefixes": *te **ot**-des* 'give away' (~ Rus. ***ot**dat'*), *te **vy**-des* 'give out' (~ Rus. ***vy**dat'*), *te **roz**-des* 'distribute' (~ Rus. ***raz**dat'*)

- "aspectual prefixes": ***po**-puchne* 'they asked' (~ Rus. ***po**prosili*), ***u**-chorde* 'they stole' (~ Rus. ***u**krali*)

MAT-borrowing of prefixes

Rusakov (2001: 315-316): No direct match of the aspectual functions of Russian prefixed vs. simple verbs, rather a degree of free variation.

*I avne roma, **u-galyne** so joj buty kerd'a*

'And the Roma came, (they) **discovered** that she worked'

*Nu dote gyne pal latyr te roden i <u>vdrug</u> **galyne**…*

'And then (they) went to look for her, and suddenly **discovered**…' (cf. Rus. **u**znali)

MAT-borrowing of prefixes

- Slavic or Baltic prefixes are mostly borrowed as lexical modifiers of verbs and have concrete semantic content (non necessarily spatial);

- when "aspectual" prefixes (or rather aspectual functions of prefixes) are also borrowed, their use does not become obligatory or systematic;

- hence, borrowing even of whole systems of preverbs does not lead to the emergence of grammatical aspect in recipient languages.

PAT-borrowing of prefixes

Eastern Yiddish

PAT-borrowing of prefixes

Eastern varieties of Yiddish have restructured the inherited Germanic system of preverbs under the influence of Slavic (Wexler 1964, 1972, Talmy 1982, Šišigin 2015 etc.).

Notably, the Yiddish preverbs have acquired (or retained?) the systematic perfectivizing function.

PAT-borrowing of prefixes

Polysemy copying (Šišigin 2015: 189-190):

unter*gebn* 'add' ~ Pol. ***pod****dać* 'id.' vs. Germ.
unter*geben* 'subordinate' (adjective)
unter*gisn* 'pour more' ~ Rus. ***pod****lit'* vs. Germ.
hinzu*gießen*
unter*zogn* 'promt, give a cue' ~ Rus. ***pod****skazat'*
vs. Germ. ***unter****sagen* 'prohibit'

PAT-borrowing of prefixes

Perfectivizing function (Šišigin 2015: 126-127, 130) :

onshraybn 'write' ~ Rus. **na**pisat'
ontseykhenen 'paint' ~ Rus. **na**risovat'
onkormen 'feed' ~ Rus. **na**kormit'
ontrinken 'let drink' ~ Rus. **na**poit'

PAT-borrowing of prefixes

The use of prefixed verbs in perfective contexts is not obligatory in Yiddish, and neither are prefixed verbs banned from imperfective contexts.

shporn zey **op** fun di kleyne fardinstn
'They save from their small earnings'

vi a fish **ligt** er **op** gantse shoen untern vaser
'He lies under the water like a fish for many hours'

Gold 1999: 75; cf. Aronson 1985

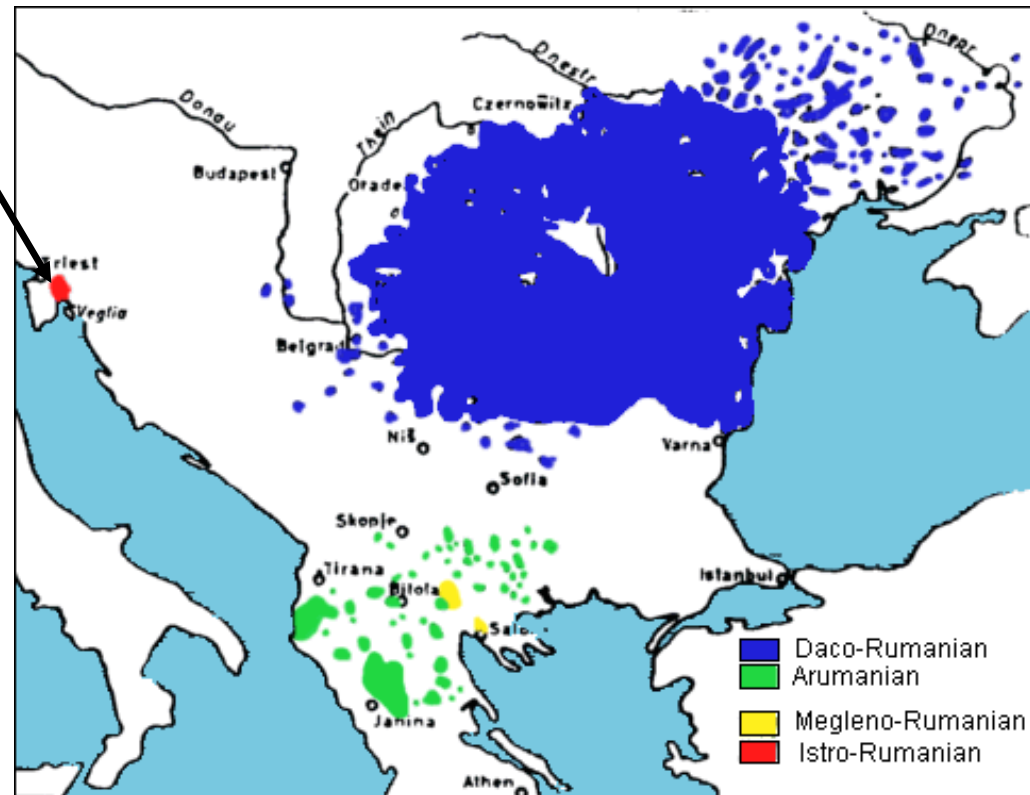# PAT-borrowing of prefixes

"Whereas the Slavic prefix indicates ... that the end point of a process is actually <u>reached</u> (unless countermanded by a secondary suffix), the Yiddish prefix indicates, rather, that the end point of a process is <u>in view</u>." (Talmy 1982: 242)

- telicity (actionality) rather than perfectivity (aspect)

Reinterpretation
of borrowed morphology

Istroromanian

Reinterpretation
of borrowed morphology

Istroromanian is a unique case of a language which has borrowed from Slavic (Čakavian Croatian) not only a system of perfectivizing verbal prefixes, but the imperfectivizing suffix *-va* as well.

Still, the resulting system is far from the Slavic prototype.

Reinterpretation
of borrowed morphology

- "lexical" preverbs:

  lega 'tie' ~ ***rez****lega* 'untie', cf. Rus. ***raz****vjazat'*

  plănje 'weep' ~ ***ze****plănje* 'burst into tears', cf. Rus. ***za****plakat'*

  durmi 'sleep' ~ ***na****durmi (se)* 'sleep enough', cf. Rus. ***na****spat'sja*

- perfectivizing preverbs:

  ćira ~ ***po****ćira* 'have supper', cf. Rus ***po****užinat'*

  parti ~ ***res****parti* 'divide', cf. Rus. ***raz****delit*

Klepikova 1959: 38-45, Hurren 1969

Reinterpretation
of borrowed morphology

- imperfectivizing suffix:
  - with simplex bases:

  a mnat 's/he went' ~ *mn**av**eit-a* 'they were going'

  a scutat-av 's/he heard' ~ *scut**av**eit-a* 's/he was listening'

  - with prefixed bases:

  ***res**cl'ide* 'open!' ~ ***res**cl'id**av**eit-a* 's/he kept opening'

  ***ze**durmit* 'they fell asleep' ~ ***ze**durm**iv**eaia* 'they were falling asleep'

Klepikova 1959: 47-55, 58-60

Reinterpretation
of borrowed morphology

Istroromanian seems to have a grammaticalized
   aspectual opposition involving different
   morphological relations between imperfective and
   perfective verbs (Kovačec 1966: 71–72; Hurren
   1969):

	imperfective	perfective
prefixation	*torče* 'spin'	**po***torče* 'spin'
suffixation	*cad**av**ei* 'fall' **pot***pis**iv**ei* 'sign'	*cade* 'fall' **pot***pisei* 'sign'
conjugation class	*hitei* 'throw'	*hiti* 'throw'
suppletion	*be* 'drink'	*popi* 'drink'

Reinterpretation
of borrowed morphology

The distribution of simplex vs. suffixal verbs in Istroromanian appears to have been remodeled on the basis of the opposition "prefixal perfective ~ suffixal secondary imperfective", with many simplex verbs recategorized as perfective.

Reinterpretation of borrowed morphology

- simplex perfectives of the Romance origin:

  scunde-te *su påtu lu ia* 'hide (cf. Rus. *sprjač'sja*) under her bed'

- ~ *ancea marancu şi me* **ascundaves** 'I am hiding (cf. Rus. *prjačus'*) while they are eating'

- simplex perfectives of the Slavic origin:

  şi-av **piseit** *un libru* 'and wrote (cf. Rus. **na***pisal*) a book'

- ~ *ie nu l'a iedănaist an* **pisiveit** 'he didn't write (cf. Rus. *pisal*) to them for eleven years'

Klepikova 1959: 49, 52

Reinterpretation of borrowed morphology

The Istroromanian aspectual system:

telic base verbs:
• simplex perfectives ~ suffixal imperfectives

atelic base verbs:
• simplex imperfectives ~ prefixal perfectives
• suffixal iteratives

lexical modification by prefixes ~ suffixal secondary imperfectives/iteratives

Reinterpretation
of borrowed morphology

Istroromanian has borrowed from Slavic both the formal means of expressing perfectivity and imperfectivity and the more abstract aspectual opposition itself, but the resulting system is markedly different from the Slavic ones, to the extent that Slavic originally imperfective verbal loans have been reinterpreted as perfective.

Some conclusions

- morphology, including inflection, can be borrowed;

- different kinds of morphology are borrowed with different frequency and in different situations;

- structural linguistic change is often determined by fine-grained sociolinguistic factors.

Some conclusions

- Even numerous morphological borrowings do not lead to the creation in the recipient language of categories grammaticalized to the same extent as their models in the donor language;

- "[R]eplica categories are generally less grammaticalized than the corresponding model categories" (Heine 2012: 132)

Some conclusions

- Even in the "extreme" cases like Istroromanian grammatical systems largely built from borrowed elements are the result of internal development rather than direct "copies" of the donor systems.

Implications

- refinement of the notions of theoretical morphology (inflection vs. derivation, inherent vs. contextual inflection, "transparency" etc.)
- need to consider sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic data, both on the "macrolevel" (speech communities) and on the "microlevel" (individual linguistic behavior) for a better understanding of linguistic change in general.

Thank you!
Ačiū!

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