Language Contact in Europe

This comprehensive new work provides extensive evidence for the essential role of language contact as a primary trigger for change. Unique in breadth, it traces the spread of the periphrastic perfect across Europe over the last 2,500 years, illustrating at each stage the micro-responses of speakers and communities to macro-historical pressures. Among the key forces claimed to be responsible for normative innovations in both eastern and western Europe is “roofing” – the superstratal influence of Greek and Latin on languages under the influence of Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, respectively. The author provides a new interpretation of the notion of Sprachbund, presenting the model of a three-dimensional stratified convergence zone, and applies this model to her analysis of the HAVE and BE perfections within the Charlemagne Sprachbund. The book also tackles broader theoretical issues, for example, demonstrating the perfect tense should not be viewed as a universal category.

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Language Contact in Europe

The Periphrastic Perfect through History

Bridget Drinka

University of Texas, San Antonio
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Series Editor’s Foreword

The Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact (CALC) series was set up to publish outstanding monographs on language contact, especially by authors who approach their specific subject matter from a diachronic or developmental perspective. Our goal is to integrate the ever-growing scholarship on language diversification (including the development of creoles, pidgins, and indigenized varieties of colonial European languages), bilingual language development, code-switching, and language endangerment. We hope to provide a select forum to scholars who contribute insightfully to understanding language evolution from an interdisciplinary perspective. We favor approaches that highlight the role of ecology and draw inspiration both from the authors’ own fields of specialization and from related research areas in linguistics or other disciplines. Eclecticism is one of our mottoes, as we endeavor to comprehend the complexity of evolutionary processes associated with contact.

We are proud to add to our list Bridget Drinka’s Language Contact in Europe: The Periphrastic Perfect through History. Few researchers have undertaken the daunting task that the author has embarked upon in this comprehensive book, namely to track down the origins of the periphrastic perfect construction in Europe (which is quite complex) and to trace its diffusion across the map, while at the same time assessing the role of language contact as an essential element in this development. The book takes a wide-angle perspective, spanning the geographical breadth of Europe – from Portuguese to Finnish, from Icelandic to Bulgarian – and it delves into the 2,500-year-old history of the perfects and resultatives on this continent. Besides large-scale developments, Drinka also focuses on the micro-level responses to these “macro-historical processes”: she documents not only the movement of innovations across a population, such as the spread of HAVE-resultatives from German into the West Slavic languages, but also the role of the individual speaker as the transmitter of change. She presents, for example, the remarkable case of the Aragonese scribe who, in May 1147, switched from Visigothic to Caroline script, signaling not just a change in the scribal tradition but also an entire realignment of cultural allegiance toward trans-Pyrenean norms. This realignment is also reflected in the increased use of BE perfects in this area.
The role of sociohistorical events as actuators of change is one of the strengths of this book.

Drinka adduces extensive empirical evidence to support her striking – and undoubtedly controversial – conclusions concerning the origin and spread of the perfects. She argues, for example, that Greek was more influential in the development of the have perfect in Latin than is usually admitted. She weighs in on the long-standing debate regarding whether the Germanic perfect was modeled on that of Latin, as claimed by Antoine Meillet, or evolved independently, as argued by Emile Benveniste; she supports the former. She also argues that the have perfect, claimed by Michael Cysouw to be a “quirk” among the languages of the world, originated in Western Europe, from which it spread elsewhere.

Drinka’s theoretical conclusions deserve even more attention. For example, she confronts head-on the claim that the perfect is a universal category, and that the shift of anterior to past tense is predictable and well documented among the world’s languages. According to her, while certain changes may be considered more natural than others, their implementation depends more crucially on social “triggers” (Johanson) than on the working of universal forces. She redefines the notion of Sprachbund, replacing the older two-dimensional view of a linguistic area with a dynamic, three-dimensional visualization, which she calls a “Stratified Convergence Zone.” Essential to this characterization is the need to view externally motivated language change as multilayered and overlapping: innovations accumulate one atop the other through time; and representations of areal relationships must reflect this layering in a more complex fashion than in a simple flat map. In the same vein, she identifies the crucial role of “roofing” in Europe, east and west: she argues that the clout of the Greek Orthodox Church in the East and the Roman Catholic Church in the West played a significant role in splitting the linguistic landscape of Europe, as is well represented by the distribution of the perfects: BE perfects predominate in the East, HAVE/BE perfects have both spread in the West.

Throughout the book, Drinka fully illustrates the validity of her fundamental tenet, namely that contact is more than just “potentially present” in all change, as claimed by Bernd Heine and Tania Kuteva; it is an essential actuator of change.

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Abbreviations, Based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules

(www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php)

1       first person
2      second person
3      third person
A      agent or agent-like argument of transitive verb
ABL    ablative
ABS    absolutive
ACC    accusative
ADD    additive
ADJ    adjective
ADV    adverb(ial)
ANT    anterior
AOR    aorist
ART    article
AUX    auxiliary
CL     classifier
COMP   complementizer
COMPL  completer
CONJ   conjunctive
COP    copula
DAT    dative
DET    determiner
ERG    ergative
F      feminine
FUT    future
GEN    genitive
IMPF   Imperfect
INDIC  Indicative
INDIV  individualizer
INF    infinitive
Abbreviations, Based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules

INS       instrumental
INTR       intransitive
IPFV       imperfective
LOC       locative
M       masculine
N       neuter
NOM       nominative
PART       particle
PASS       passive
PFV       perfective
PL       plural
PRF       perfect
PROG       progressive
PRS       present
PST       past
PTCP       participle
REFL       reflexive
REL       relative
RES       resultative
S       argument of intransitive verb
SBJ       subject
SUBJ       subjunctive
SG       singular
TR       transitive
VOC       vocative

Abbreviations of Languages

N=Northern, S=Southern, St=Standard; Alb=Albanian, Arm=Armenian, Blr=Belarusian, Blg=Bulgarian, Brt=Breton, Bsq=Basque, Cal=Calabrian, Ctl=Catalan, Cz=Czech, Dan=Danish, Dut=Dutch, Eng=English, Est=Estonian, Far=Faroese, Fin=Finnish, Fr=French, Fris=Frisian, Frln=Friulian, Gag=Gagauz, Goth=Gothic, Grg=Georgian, Grk=Greek, Grm=German, Hng=Hungarian, Ice=Icelandic, Ir=Irish, It=Italian, Kash=Kashubian, Klm=Kalmyk, Kom=Komi, Krn=Karaim, Lad=Ladino, Lat=Latin, Lit=Lithuanian, LSorb=Lower Sorbian, Ltv=Latvian, Lzg=Lezgian, Mcd=Macedonian, Mlt=Maltese, Mnx=Manx, Nnts=Nenets, Nor=Norwegian, Occ=Occitan, OCS=Old Church Slavonic, OHG=Old High German, OPr=Old Prussian, OS=Old Saxon, Pol=Polish, Prt=Portuguese, Rmni=Romani, Rmn=Romansch, Rom=Romanian, Rus=Russian, ScGlc=Scots Gaelic, SCR=Serbo-Croatian, Sic=Sicilian, Slc=Slovincian, Sln=Slovenian, Slv=Slovak, Spn=Spanish, Srd=Sardinian, Swd=Swedish, Tat=Tatar, Trk=Turkish, Udm=Udmurt, Ukr=Ukrainian, USrb=Upper Sorbian, Wel=Welsh, Yidd=Yiddish
Abbreviations, Based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules

The chapters listed below utilized material from my previously published articles:

Chapter 1: Drinka 2003a
Chapter 4: Drinka 2009
Chapter 6: Drinka 2003a
Chapter 7: Drinka 2013
Chapter 8: Drinka 2013, 2016, in press a
Chapter 9: Drinka 2011, 2013
Chapter 10: Drinka 2004
Chapter 11: Drinka 2012
Chapter 12: Drinka in press b

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