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Areas, Areal Features and Areality

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1.1 Introduction

The clustering of linguistic features in geographically delimited areas has long been recognized by researchers on a wide range of languages. In the course of the twentieth century this recognition gave rise to the notion of ‘linguistic area’ (Emeneau 1980; Matras, McMahon and Vincent 2006), a region in which shared features among a number of languages are found with more than chance probability. The reason for such sharing lies in contact¹ between speakers whose own language comes under the influence of others in their environment. Admittedly, this view is simplistic, but it is useful as a first approximation because it focuses attention on speaker contact. Of course, there are many contact scenarios and many situations of bi- or multilingualism (Field 2002) in which individuals speak different languages to varying extents. In such cases the contact is speaker-internal, so to speak.

1.1.1 Areal Linguistics and Linguistic Areas

The term ‘linguistic area’ is a useful conceptual aid, and in the early days of research it helped to heighten scholars’ awareness of shared structural features among not necessarily related languages in circumscribed geographical areas. However, the term came to dominate research

¹ There is a wealth of literature on language contact, much of which is recent, e.g. Adamou (2016), Bakker and Matras (2013), Deumert and Durlleman (2006), Gilbers, Nerbonne and Schaeken (2000), Goebel, Nelde, Stry and Wölck (1996), Grant (in press), Hickey (2010), Matras (2009), Moravcsik (1978), Myers-Scotton (2002), Siemund and Kintana (2008), Thomason (1997, 2001), Winford (2003, 2005, 2013). A well-known monograph on language contact is Weinreich (1953). Van Coetsem (2000) is a more recent study offering a classification of contact. The following is a representative selection of works dealing with language contact in specific language scenarios: Aikhenvald (2002), Ansaldo (2009), Clyne (2003), Dutton and Tryon (1994), Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008), Hickey (1995), Isaac (2003), Johanson (2002), Loveday (1996), Matras (1995), Mesthrie (1992), Siegel (2000), Silva-Corvalán (1994).

(Campbell 2006), so that scholars often felt that a binary decision had to be made as to whether a given geographical area could be classified as a linguistic area or not. This concern has not always proved to be fruitful. What can be more significant is research into the forces and mechanisms which lead to languages in a given area coming to share features. This approach would highlight the scholarly concern with areality, that is, the areal concentration of linguistic features. How this concentration emerges and continues to develop is centre stage, not the attempt to attach the label 'linguistic area' to any given region.

1.1.2 Areal Concentrations and Geography

For areal concentrations to arise, many centuries of prolonged contact and population interaction are usually required, especially as the common features of such areas usually belong to the closed classes of the languages involved, typically to the phonology and morphosyntax (Matras and Sakel 2007). Furthermore, the languages of a putative area show not only internal coherence but also recognizable external boundaries with languages immediately outside the area. So feature clustering is both positive within an area and negative vis-à-vis adjoining regions. The non-linguistic characteristics of an area involve its geography: regions bounded by mountain ranges, large rivers, the sea on two or three sides (peninsulas) are all candidates for locations with areal concentrations of linguistic features.

The number of features which an area shares is a much-discussed matter in linguistic typology (Campbell, Chapter 2, this volume; Croft 1990; Haspelmath, König, Oesterreicher and Raible 2001; Hickey 2001, 2003a). However, the number does not need to be great, and there are cases where single features are involved. In the main one can contend that the fewer the features shared in an area the more these must be typologically unusual (statistically rare across the world's languages) for them to be areally significant.

1.1.3 Arealty, Contact and Language Change

An areal view of a region is a description of its language configuration at a certain point in time. Areal considerations become dynamic once processes of language change² are considered. Generally in studies of change there is a tension between possible internal versus external factors (Hickey 2012). Some authors see internal causes as primary unless there is no other possible account, in which case contact may then be appealed to; see Lass

² Change as a result of contact is treated in virtually all textbooks on language change. The following works are examples of studies in which contact-induced change occupies a central position: Jones and Esch (2002), Mufwene (2008), Nichols (1992), Sankoff (2002), Trudgill (1986).

and Wright (1986) as a clear demonstration of this stance. Other authors, e.g. Vennemann (2002), see contact, i.e. external causes, as equally possible for change and by no means secondary to internal causes. The weighting of internal and external factors in contact and change has consequences for the classification of languages: see McMahon (2013). It can also be significant in accounting for how not just single features but structural patterns arose in languages, as in the discussion of possible contact-induced grammaticalization (Heine and Kuteva 2003, 2005). However, not all discussions of contact-induced change involve an areal dimension. For instance, the literature on creolization and contact – e.g. Holm (2004), Huber and Velupillai (2007), McWhorter (2000), Migge (2003), Siegel (1987), Thomason and Kaufman (1988) – does not generally include considerations of areality.

1.1.4 The Dynamics of Areality

The basis for areality is obviously language contact, which leads to different degrees of feature transfer between languages. Certain developments in a language, and the community which speaks it, can be viewed as areality-enhancing and others as areality-diminishing. For instance, accommodation (Trudgill 1986) is areality-enhancing but dissociation (Hickey 2013) is areality-diminishing.

Dynamics of areality

Arealty-enhancing

accommodation during contact (without shift)
 increase in bi-/multilingualism with sharing
 feature transfer during language shift leading to sharing across at least two languages

Arealty-diminishing

dissociation between languages or varieties
 decrease in bi-/multilingualism with loss of shared features
 processes of standardization or de-creolization
 importation of outside features to only some of the languages/varieties in an area

1.1.5 Changes in Areality

The degree of areality within a region is not constant. The processes outlined above can lead to changes in the level of areality. This means that investigations of putative feature-sharing areas at present are just snapshots in a historical development which began in the past, in most cases in the deep past. And if a region has a high level of areality this does not mean that it will maintain this level: see the areality-diminishing processes listed above.

Figures 1.1–1.4 offer more details of some of the processes which can lead to a change in the areality of a region containing different languages, whether genetically related or not.

1.2 Issues in Areal Linguistics

Linguistic levels are affected to different degrees in regions sharing languages. It would seem that grammar is least affected in areal contact because it is the core of a language and consists of closed classes acquired in early childhood: see Figure 1.5. However, as researchers on language contact have pointed out (Hickey 2010; Thomason 2001), there is no part of a language which cannot in principle be borrowed by speakers of another language. The details of this borrowing process, above all whether between speakers or internally for single bilingual speakers (Matras 2009), is a matter of discussion in the literature.

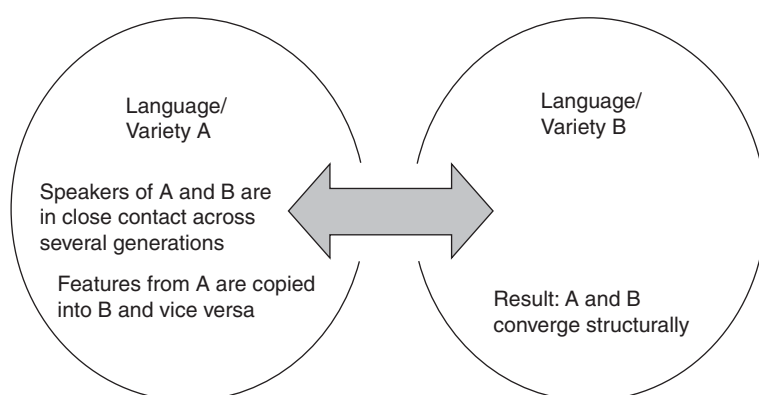


Figure 1.1 Increase in areality due to close contact

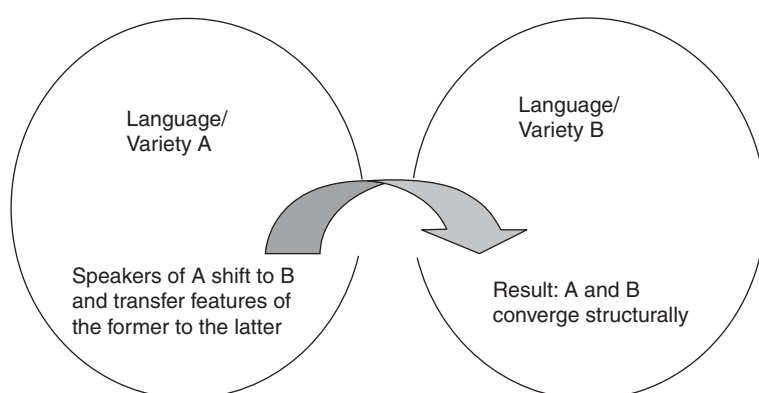


Figure 1.2 Increase in areality due to language shift

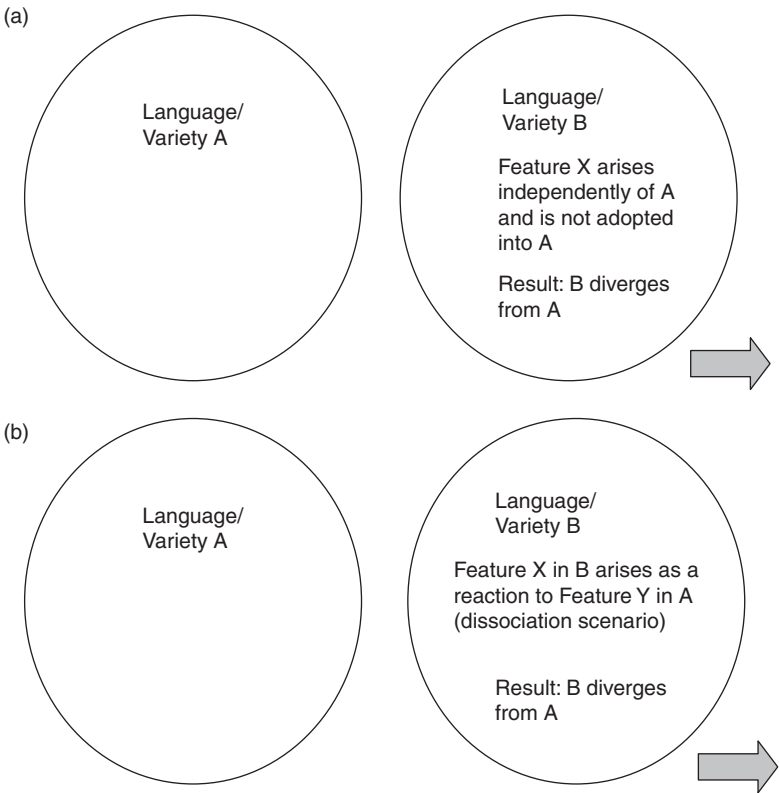


Figure 1.3 Feature development: decrease in areality

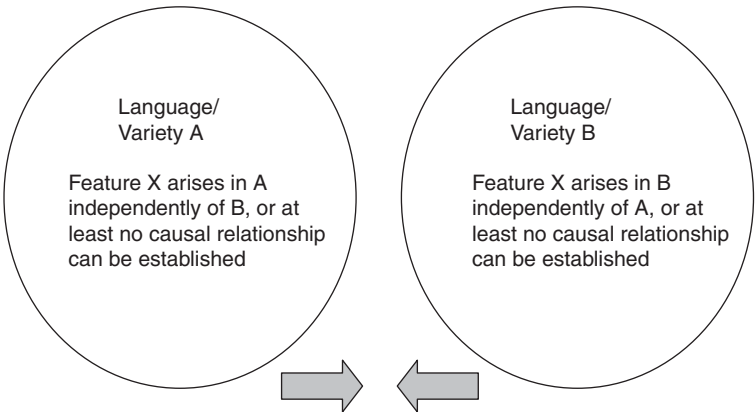


Figure 1.4 Feature development: (coincidental) increase in areality

1.2.1 Levels of Language

Sound variation can be used to differentiate quite small areas, as opposed to grammatical variation which tends to be typical of larger regions. The reason is probably that phonetic variation is immediately available for

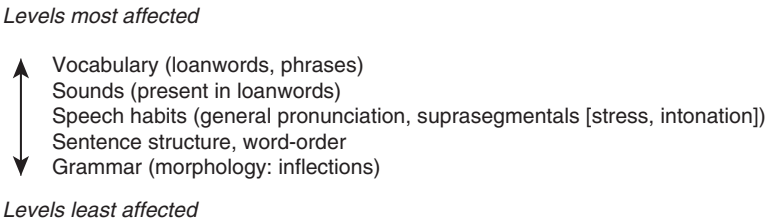


Figure 1.5 Levels of language and borrowing

assessment in anyone’s speech whereas grammatical features might not occur in any given stretch of discourse and so are not so suitable for fine differentiation, either spatially or socially.

The development of inflectional morphology is generally a community-internal phenomenon which takes several centuries to mature: consider the extensive morphology in many Indo-European languages. With adult language contact, morphological features are not usually transferred unless they are transparent, productive and easily separable from lexical bases. However, with child language learners, morphology can be borrowed with ease.

Syntactic transfer across speech communities can result via bilingualism and/or language shift, but whether it can result from adult contact among speakers of different languages is disputed in the literature; see the discussion of the rise of the progressive in English (Hickey, Chapter 10, this volume). The structures in question may be those used to express the same category or which represent the same organizational principle in two or more languages but where there is a difference in exponence, such as the change from one canonical word order to another, e.g. the rise of SOV in a language which previously had VSO as basic order. Probably the earliest example of contact-induced syntactic change shows just this: despite the posited verb-initial syntax of Proto-Semitic, Akkadian shows verb-final position, which is assumed to be an areal influence from Sumerian (Zólyomi 2012: 402). Syntactic transfer is also common in cases of language shift, where the original language of a speech community is abandoned and (nearly) all the speakers shift to the new language within a fairly well delimited period of time, a few centuries at most. In such situations speakers search for equivalents to structures in the target language which they are familiar with from their native language (Hickey 2001).

As an open class which speakers are consciously aware of, the lexicon is usually the first to experience transfer in adult language contact. All languages with a documented history exhibit lexical borrowings in their textual record, although the amount of borrowing can vary. For instance, Irish throughout its history has experienced many borrowings from Latin, Old Norse, Anglo-Norman and English, whereas Icelandic has relatively few borrowings (Kvaran 2004: 145–149).

There is, however, an important caveat here: if the speakers of languages in contact have a negative attitude towards each other, then lexical borrowings become unlikely. But if the contact is very prolonged then structural transfer from closed classes, which show less conscious awareness among speakers, can occur: see the examples discussed in Epps and Michael (Chapter 32, this volume).

1.3 Structure of the Current Volume

Part I of this volume is concerned with general issues in areal linguistics. The opening chapter by Lyle Campbell, 'Why is it so hard to define a linguistic area?', considers the pitfalls in defining linguistic areas and discusses a large number of suggested areas while examining the features they contain and the languages spoken there.

In his contribution 'Areas and universals', Balthasar Bickel addresses the relationship of language universals to linguistic areas. The former has been researched intensively in recent years (Comrie and Dahl 1984; Good 2008; Mairal and Gil 2006), and Bickel emphasizes the necessity for this research to be coupled to areal linguistics in order to increase the linguistic reliability of statements concerning areal features.³

In the field of areal linguistics, the Balkans is regarded as one of the classic cases of a linguistic area (Joseph 1983). In their chapter 'Reassessing sprachbunds: A view from the Balkans', Victor A. Friedman and Brian D. Joseph re-examine the evidence put forward for the Balkans and discuss the general relevance of these arguments. They also consider what features can be regarded as defining for a linguistic area, and in what combinations.

The level of phonology, both segmental and suprasegmental, is catered for in three chapters. The first, by Juliette Blevins, 'Areal sound patterns: From perceptual magnets to stone soup', highlights the similarities between internal mechanisms for first language acquisition of phonology and external mechanisms by which sounds are borrowed and diffuse areally.

The chapter by Thomas Stolz and Nataliya Levkovich, 'Convergence and divergence in the phonology of the languages of Europe', reports on a large-scale typological study of sound systems across Europe and parts of Western Asia with a view to recognizing and accounting for macro-patterns in sound systems, especially those which are probably triggered by language contact.

Suprasegmental phonology and contact (Clements and Gooden 2009) is addressed by Harry van der Hulst, Rob Goedemans and Keren Rice in their

³ There is also a body of literature on 'vernacular universals' in the context of English studies, so-called Angloverals (Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto 2009).

contribution 'Word prominence and areal linguistics'. The authors present three case studies and attempt to link the observations made in their attested data with those gleaned in second language phonology and loan phonology studies.

The areal linguistics of semantics is covered by Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Henrik Liljegren in their chapter 'Semantic patterns from an areal perspective', in which they offer a typological classification of areal semantics determined on the basis of a number of lexico-semantic databases.

Contact studies in the European context are well established (Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001; Fisiak 1995; Kastovsky and Mettinger 2001; Ureland and Broderick 1991), and the chapters presented at the outset of Part II examine and re-evaluate insights and conclusions reached about the areality of the Germanic and the Slavic languages. Johan van der Auwera and Daniël Van Olmen, in 'The Germanic languages and areal linguistics', examine the Germanic languages as a whole, focusing on linguistic contacts with non-Germanic languages. The areality of English is the concern of both Raymond Hickey's chapter on 'Britain and Ireland' as well as Bernd Kortmann and Verena Schröter's contribution on 'Varieties of English'. The approaches are somewhat different. Hickey looks at the diachrony of English in Britain and Ireland and considers historical contact with Celtic in some detail, while Kortmann and Schröter cast a much wider net and classify the varieties of English worldwide from a typological perspective. The two chapters thus provide complementary views of developments within the English language.

Alan Timberlake's chapter 'Slavic languages' considers the large family of Slavic languages with regard to the various types and periods of contact they experienced over their long recorded history. Here the role of external history and social structure on language development is given particular attention.

The Caucasus and Western Asia (Haig and Khan 2015) are treated in two dedicated chapters: 'The Caucasus' by Sven Grawunder and 'Western Asia: East Anatolia as a transition zone' by Geoffrey Haig. Both authors offer fine-grained presentations of language contact and contact-induced change in their respective areas in the modern era, and present classifications of highly complex language regions based on the results of their research.

The areal linguistics of Africa (Güldemann 2016) begins with the overview chapter by Bernd Heine and Anne-Maria Fehn, 'An areal view of Africa', in which the authors deal with various classification proposals and assess their merit in the light of the most recent research into Africa, especially from a typological perspective. This approach is continued by Gerrit Dimmendaal in 'Areal contact in Nilo-Saharan', where he looks at morphological structures, notably case systems, to

attempt a classification of this large phylum in Eastern and Central Africa. The largest language group in Africa is scrutinized in Jeff Good's chapter 'Niger-Congo languages'. In particular he addresses questions concerning the internal composition of the family and the proposals for various subgroupings. He stresses the importance of understanding the relationship between Niger-Congo cultures and the Niger-Congo languages.

Southern Africa is the subject of two chapters. The first is 'The Kalahari Basin area as a "sprachbund" before the Bantu expansion', by Tom Güldemann and Anne-Maria Fehn, which examines the evidence for linguistic groupings in the Kalahari Basin, which stretches from southern Namibia through Botswana to southwest Zambia, before the Bantu migrations into southern Africa which affected the distribution of pre-Bantu languages in the region due to contact and mixture. The second chapter, 'South Africa and areal linguistics' by Rajend Mesthrie, considers both native Bantu languages of South Africa and the two major European descendant languages, English and Afrikaans, and considers the possible cases of transfer across linguistic boundaries in South Africa among these languages in the centuries of the colonial and the more recent post-colonial period.

South Asia (Hock and Bashir 2016) is represented in this volume by two chapters. The first, by John Peterson, is 'Jharkhand as a "linguistic area"', in which he investigates contact across the Indo-Aryan/Munda family border. The observable convergence is not just in the lexical area but encompasses many features of morphosyntax as well. In 'Sri Lanka and South India', Umberto Ansaldi investigates the predominance of a number of typological profiles for languages in different parts of the world and then applies the insights from this research to the linguistic situation in Sri Lanka.

The region of northern Siberia, stretching to the far east of Northern Asia, is the topic of Martine Robbeets' chapter on 'The Transeurasian languages', in which she takes a fresh look at areality over this vast area by examining the realization of a set of 27 features which show parallels among languages as far apart as Uralic in the west and Nivkh and Ainu in the east. A specific linguistic subsystem, that of case-marking, is examined by Gregory Anderson for languages of Northeastern Siberia - 'The changing profile of case marking in the Northeastern Siberia area'. He notes that the system of case-marked clausal subordination is gradually being replaced by another case system under the influence of contact with Russian.

The main language families of China are outlined in Hilary Chappell's 'Languages of China in their East and Southeast Asian context', in which she examines the areal linguistics of these large groupings. She then scrutinizes three small clusters in which contact and transfer from non-Sinitic languages have occurred.

The convergence experienced by the languages of Southeast Asia is examined in the chapter by N. J. Enfield, 'Language in the Mainland Southeast Asia area'. He reports on the confirmation of standard wisdoms concerning these mainland languages, e.g. their structural similarities, as well as on newer research which challenges orthodox views such as how the noted convergence took place during historical social contact. A more specific investigation is offered by James Kirby and Marc Brunelle, who look at phonological tone in the same group of languages in their chapter 'Southeast Asian tone in areal perspective'. They describe the diverse kinds of tone systems found in Mainland Southeast Asia and question whether tone is indeed a strong indicator of convergence in this area.

Australia and the Pacific is dealt with in a series of four chapters. The first of these, 'The areal linguistics of Australia' by Luisa Miceli and Alan Dench, looks at standard views on areal groupings in Australia against the background of their own detailed research in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. This work confirms the complex interaction of genetic relationship and language contact in the areal settings of Australia.

An in-depth examination of classification proposals for the languages of New Guinea (Palmer 2015) and some neighbouring regions is given by Malcolm Ross in 'Languages of the New Guinea Region'. He specifically addresses the question of whether a typological profile can be established for New Guinea languages, or any subsection of these, which could account for structural similarities over and beyond those established by phylogenetic connections. By looking at a predetermined set of variables across a wide range of languages, Ross was able to establish that while the occurrence of variables was not always in geographically contiguous areas, nonetheless constellations of variable values were recognized which were hardly the outcome of chance.

Languages from two of the major cultural zones of the island Pacific are examined in two subsequent chapters. In 'Languages of Eastern Melanesia' Paul Geraghty examines the historical evidence for Melanesian languages and for Papuan languages in the area, and considers the complex landscape of present-day Vanuatu and other locations such as the Solomon Islands and New Caledonia. The linguistic features he scrutinized cross-linguistically include serial verbs and numeral systems. In 'The Western Micronesian sprachbund' Anthony Grant examines the field of lexical borrowings, and classifies the languages of the area as lexical donors and lexical recipients, or indeed both.

The areal linguistics of the Americas is covered by the final three chapters. The first is 'Native North American languages', a tour de force by Marianne Mithun in which she brings her great expertise in this area to bear on issues of classification and cross-influence in a vast and complex language region. No less complex, but with different ecologies, are the areas of South America, which are examined in two dedicated chapters. 'The areal linguistics of Amazonia', by Patience Epps and Lev Michael,