The Cambridge Handbook of Language Contact

VOLUME 1

Language contact – the linguistic outcomes of populations speaking different languages coming into contact with each other – has been pervasive in human history. However, where histories of language contact are comparable, experiences of migrant populations have been only similar, not identical. Given this, how does language contact work? With contributions from an international team of scholars, this Handbook – the first in a two-volume set – delves into this question from multiple perspectives and provides state-of-the-art research on population movement and language contact and change. It begins with an overview of how language contact as a research area has evolved since the late nineteenth century. The chapters then cover various processes and theoretical issues associated with population movement and language contact worldwide. It is essential reading for anybody interested in the dynamics of social interactions in diverse contact settings and how the changing ecologies influence the linguistic outcomes.

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Genuinely broad in scope, each handbook in this series provides a complete state-of-the-field overview of a major sub-discipline within language study and research. Grouped into broad thematic areas, the chapters in each volume encompass the most important issues and topics within each subject, offering a coherent picture of the latest theories and findings. Together, the volumes will build into an integrated overview of the discipline in its entirety.

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Contents

Volume I: Population Movement & Language Change

List of Maps page ix
List of Figures xi
List of Tables xii
List of Contributors xiv
Preface xix

Introduction
1. Language Contact: What a Rich and Intellectually Stimulating History since the Late Nineteenth Century! Salikoko S. Mufwene & Anna María Escobar 3

Part One: Language Contact and Genetic Linguistics
2. Language Contact and Historical Linguistics Brian D. Joseph 43
3. The Chinese Expansion and Language Coexistence in Modern China Randy J. LaPolla 64
4. Tracing Language Contact in Africa’s Past Bonny Sands 84
5. Populations in Contact: Linguistic, Archaeological, and Genomic Evidence for Indo-European Diffusion Bridget Drinka 122
6. The Impact of Autochthonous Languages on Bantu Language Variation: A Comparative View on Southern and Central Africa Koen Bostoen & Hilde Gunnink 152

Part Two: Linguistic Areas
7. The Balkans Victor A. Friedman 189
8. The Amazon Basin: Linguistic Areas and Language Contact Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald 232
CONTENTS

9. Migration and Trade as Drivers of Language Spread and Contact in Indigenous Latin America  
   Thiago Costa Chacon  
   261

10. Language Contact in South Asia  
    Hans Henrich Hock  
    299

Part Three: Language Spread

11. The Geographic and Demographic Expansion of Malay  
    James T. Collins  
    327

12. Geographic and Demographic Spread of Swahili  
    Alamin Mazrui  
    358

13. Arabic Language Contact  
    Jonathan Owens  
    382

Part Four: Emergence and Spread of Some European Languages

14. The Emergence and Evolution of Romance Languages in Europe and the Americas  
    John M. Lipski  
    427

15. The Expansion and Evolution of Portuguese  
    J. Clancy Clements  
    459

16. French and English in Contact in North America  
    Robert A. Papen  
    505

17. French in African Contact Settings  
    Cécile B. Vigouroux  
    540

18. The Geographical and Demographic Expansion of English  
    Edgar W. Schneider & Sarah Buschfeld  
    583

Part Five: Language Diasporas

19. Diasporas: An Overview  
    Dirk Hoerder & Henry Yu  
    613

20. Labor Migrations: Language Change in Communities and Diasporas  
    Dirk Hoerder & Henry Yu  
    641

21. The Korean Diaspora  
    Joseph Sung-Yul Park  
    670

22. The Chinese Diaspora: Language Maintenance and Loss  
    Sherman Lee  
    690

23. The Diachrony of Yiddish and Judaeo-Spanish as Contact Languages  
    Marie-Christine Bornes-Varol & Anne Szulmajster-Celnikier  
    716

Author Index  
    746

Language Index  
    750

Subject Index  
    755
Maps Volume I

3.1: Initial Chinese migrations 66
3.2: Chinese Middle Period migrations 67
3.3: Chinese Major pre-modern migrations 68
4.1: Linguistic geographical zones of Africa 85
6.1: Distribution area, internal classification, and hypothesized routes of initial expansion of the Bantu family according to Grollemund et al. (2015) 153
6.2: Distribution of Khoe-Kwadi, Kx'a, and Tuu language families and main languages in Southern Africa 159
6.3: Distribution of Bantu languages in southern Africa 162
6.4: Distribution of languages spoken by Central African Pygmy communities 168
7.1: The languages and principal dialects of the Balkan sprachbund 193
8.1: Languages of the Vaupés and the Içana River Basins 235
8.2: The extant languages of the Xingu Indigenous Park 246
9.1: Major language families and multilingual regions in Latin America 262
9.2: The spread of major linguistic families discussed in this paper 265
9.3: Major trade routes in indigenous Latin America mentioned in this paper 267
10.1: Approximate distribution of South Asian language families 301
11.1: Some archaeological sites associated with Old Malay and the Sanskrit cosmopolis (Collins 1998) 331
11.2: Major ports where Malay functioned as the first or second languages 1550–1650 (Collins 1998) 334
11.3: Banda and Ambon islands in Central Maluku 335
11.4: Indigenous languages of Maluku in the late 20th century 341
11.5: The geographic distribution of regional Malay dialects in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei (Collins 1999) 350
## LIST OF MAPS VOLUME I

12.1: Swahili-speaking area 359
13.1: Places where Arabic is spoken as a vernacular majority language 387
15.1: Portuguese in Africa 460
15.2: Regions of Brazil with relevant areas, states, and cities 465
15.3: Portuguese in Asia 489
16.1: New France in the early eighteenth century 507
17.1: Former French and Belgian colonies south of North Africa 543
17.2: Senegal: major cities and neighbors 546
Figures Volume I

4.1: Chumburung loanword origins  page 87
4.2: Distribution of language families in the central Sudan region  91
5.1: Anatolian hypothesis. Proposed routes of migration by early farmers into Europe 7000–5000 BCE  123
5.2: Steppe hypothesis. Arrival of steppe ancestry in central Europe during the Late Neolithic, c. 2500 BCE  123
5.3: Mapping of the parallel migrations into Europe and South Asia, from the Near East, after 7000 BCE (1) and from the steppe, after 3000 BCE (2)  129
5.4: Distribution of wheel and wagon terminology  134
5.5: "Aegean-style" disc-shaped clay loom weights from a Minoan village at Myrtos, southern Crete. Early Bronze Age, mid–late third millennium BCE  136
5.6: Greek vase from Chiusi, Italy, depicting Penelope at her warp-weighted loom  136
5.7: Scene of women weaving on a warp-weighted loom on a Greek lekythos, c. 500 BCE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Fletcher Fund, 1931: no. 31.11.10  137
5.8: Map displaying the distribution of loom types in Eurasia  139
5.9: Culture groups of the Middle Bronze Age, 2800–2200 BCE  145
13.1: Tree 1: Arabic as Central Semitic  384
13.2: Tree 2: Arabic as South Semitic  384
## Tables Volume I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>PIE lexicon for wheels and wagons</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Sample of double vocabulary for Greek textile terms</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Greek weaving terms</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Greek &amp; Indo-Iranian similarities vs. other IE languages</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>A synthesis of evidence from three disciplines</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Extant languages of the Xingu Indigenous Park</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Extant languages of the Xingu Indigenous Park</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>Aramaic–Arabic dia-planar diffusion</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>Degree to which words are idiomatic in Nigerian Arabic</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>Typology of urban dialect contact</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Black, Pardo, and the general population in Brazil in 1872, 1890, and 1940</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>Numbers (rounded) and percentage of Blacks and Pardos in Brazil by region</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>A comparison of features in the colloquial/vernacular varieties of Brazilian and European Portuguese</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>Vernacular Brazilian Portuguese verb paradigm variation, with <em>falar</em> ‘speak’ as an illustrative example</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>Inflectional suffixes in the Portuguese-based creoles of Upper Guinea and the Gulf of Guinea</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>Subject, object, and disjunctive pronouns in the Portuguese-based African creoles</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>Numbers of speakers and percentages of the languages with most speakers in Angola</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>Numbers of speakers and percentages of the languages with most speakers in Mozambique.</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>A comparison of the colloquial/vernacular varieties of Angolan, Mozambican, Brazilian, and European Portuguese</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.10</td>
<td>Nominal and verbal morphology retained in Asian Portuguese-based creoles</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.11</td>
<td>Subject, object, and disjunctive pronouns in the Portuguese-based Asian creoles</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables Volume I

16.1: Population by first official language spoken 512
16.2: A comparison of borrowing features in various French-speaking communities in North America 533
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Preface

When we accepted the invitation to edit *The Cambridge handbook of language contact*, we did not realize what a big challenge the project would be. To begin with, we underestimated how difficult it would be to avoid producing a book that would simply replicate the contents of counterparts published earlier on the subject matter of language contact except in organizing the table of contents differently and having the chapters written by different experts. This would otherwise impart more or less the same information, though perhaps from some other perspectives and with other takes on certain topics and issues. We wanted to produce a book that would complement its predecessors in some ways without omitting subjects considered central to the research area that preceding handbooks include.

However, being a later addition to this line of publications, we were also determined to produce a state-of-the-art work that is as representative as possible of the various research topics that scholars claiming to do contact linguistics investigate nowadays. We wanted to show how the various subgroups of scholars associated with these research subareas have contributed to our understanding of language behavior “under contact conditions.” On the other hand, part of our discussion in Chapter 1 of this first volume also claims that nothing happens to any language, including the emergence of norms in a monolingual community, that has nothing to do with contact. The basic level of language contact is inter-idiolectal, although, to be sure, contact itself takes place in the minds of speakers or signers.

We also decided early on, consistent with our own research interests and with the very beginnings of the scholarship on language contact in the nineteenth century (see section 2 of Chapter 1, this volume), to give the project more of a diachronic than synchronic bias. So, many of the chapters are on language contacts as outcomes of population movements and changes in population structures. These can be considered as actuators of language change and of speciation, as well as of language spread and of the
emergence of language diasporas and language/linguistic areas. They are likewise associated with the emergence of lingua francas and language endangerment and loss where particular languages prevail as dominant vernaculars at the expense of the competition (see Volume 2). A particular category of language spread includes the dispersal of Western European languages, especially how they have evolved in various colonies. However, this volume includes other cases, which actually do shed light on the emergence of the European language diasporas, especially in the ways they highlight the actuating role of emergent population structures – among other ecological factors – in the formation of diasporic language varieties. (A subset of these are discussed in Volume 2, where the chapters have been allocated owing to other considerations that prevailed in our organization of the Handbook.) These chapters are all positioned in their own separate groups, in order to enable the reader to make comparisons more easily – across languages and across geographical regions – if they are so inclined.

However, there are many more topics that are dealt with in contact linguistics; and our original project grew in size to the point where one Handbook could not include them all. So, we had to split the book into two volumes and allocate the following other topics to Volume 2, on Multilingualism in population structure, a complement to this one on Population movements and language change. It includes several chapters on multilingualism and other developments from language coexistence in the individual and in society in our times, such as urban youth languages, super-diversity, the emergence of lingua francas, codeswitching and/or translanguaging, language endangerment, and borrowings. Most of the discussions are adequately embedded in the relevant population structures. In part of one chapter (Volume 2), one of the authors even presents longitudinal biographies of some individuals to highlight in part the role of personal motivation and of one’s socioeconomic position in society, aside from other factors, in (dis)favoring the speaker’s ability to sustain competence in one of the languages. There are also chapters on how Norman and English influence each other on the Channel Islands and about structural outcomes of language contact. These include the emergence of creoles, pidgins, and other mixed languages.

Together the two volumes are generally comprehensive, although we realized too late, while writing Chapter 1 of the present volume, that we could have invited contributions in the traditions of some forerunners of the present scholarship, such as on language shift and on diglossia, as well as on some important topics such as speech continua, which need not be associated only with creoles coexisting with the acrolectal varieties of their lexifiers nor with change.

Nonetheless, as the reader will undoubtedly also realize from Chapter 1 – a great deal of which is devoted to a historical survey of the scholarship of language contact (Section 2) – this research area is extensive and diverse. It has evolved and expanded significantly since its late-nineteenth-century
origins in Indo-European genetic linguistics. Then, as Western Europeans were engaging in the last phase of their colonization of the world and considered colonized subjects as inferior to them, most forerunners of linguistics as a profession disavowed as “bastard tongues” creoles and pidgins that had evolved from the contact of European languages with non-European ones. Colonialism entailed population movements and new population structures with unequal race-based distributions of economic and political power, compounded with negative social attitudes toward the dominated and minoritized people.

All these factors and others bear on the unfolding of language contact as a vast research area, advocating for the ecological approach initiated already explicitly or implicitly by a handful of dissenting forerunners in the late nineteenth century, an approach that today’s scholars can now augment with a dose of interdisciplinarity even in bridging language contact with other subfields of linguistics. Consequently, the authors could not write their chapters in ways that make them fit only in one of the categories adopted for the convenience of organizing the two volumes. We have allocated some of the chapters to groups that highlight aspects of the discussions that, we feared, might otherwise be overlooked by some readers. Thus, in Chapter 1 of this volume, we also discuss particular (but not all the) contributions of the chapters in an order that is not always consistent with the table of contents. We thought that doing so will help the reader navigate easily through the volumes to identify related chapters that are not grouped together, although they could have been. The subject and language indexes will also be very helpful. The parts of the two volumes, as we have conceived them, are intended to help the reader realize the ways in which the chapters grouped together complement each other, though they have affinities with chapters in other parts of the Handbook, as made evident by cross-references in our presentation.

As imperfect as we find the end result (in trying to show order out of apparent chaos), we are happy to share with the reader this compendium of scholarship on language contact and change. We apologize to the contributors for delays that the project has suffered since they responded to the first round of editing. But we also believe in the saying that “things of quality have no fear of time.” To the authors, many hearty thanks for your patience and diligence; and to the reader, we appreciate your interest. We are grateful to Helen Barton for trusting us, also patiently, with this monumental project, which we have found intellectually quite rewarding. We are also grateful to Cambridge University Press’s Syndicate for allowing us to produce two volumes with the full contents of the accepted chapters rather than asking us to curtail the Handbook down to one volume with shorter chapters or even without some of the chapters. The reader will appreciate the wealth of useful information they provide.