

Cambridge University Press
978-1-009-11332-8 — Linguistic Ecology and Language Contact
Edited by Ralph Ludwig, Steve Pagel, Peter Mühlhäusler
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Linguistic Ecology and Language Contact

Contributions from an international team of experts revisit and update the concept of linguistic ecology in order to critically examine current theoretical approaches to language contact. Language is understood as a part of complex socio-historical-cultural systems, and interaction between the different dimensions and levels of these systems is considered to be essential for specific language forms. This book presents a uniform, abstract model of linguistic ecology based on, among others, two concepts of Edmund Husserl's philosophy (parts and wholes, and foundation). It considers the individual speaker in the specific communication situation to be the essential heuristic basis of linguistic analysis. The chapters present and employ a new, transparent, and accessible contact linguistic vocabulary to aid reader comprehension, and explore a wide range of language contact situations in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific. Fascinating reading for students and researchers across contact linguistics and cultural studies.

RALPH LUDWIG is Professor of Romance Linguistics at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.

PETER MÜHLHÄUSLER is the Emeritus Foundation Professor of Linguistics at the University of Adelaide and Supernumerary Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford.

STEVE PAGEL is Assistant Professor of Romance Linguistics at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009113328

DOI: 10.1017/9781139649568

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First published 2019

First paperback edition 2021

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-04135-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-11332-8 Paperback

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Contributors

- CYRIL ASLANOV, Aix-Marseille Université
CYNTHIA DERMARKAR, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg
FRANÇOISE GADET, Université Paris Ouest
JUAN CARLOS GODENZZI, Université de Montréal
SILKE JANSEN, Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg
SIBYLLE KRIEGEL, Aix-Marseille Université
RALPH LUDWIG, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
LORENZA MONDADA, Universität Basel
PETER MÜHLHÄUSLER, The University of Adelaide
STEVE PAGEL, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
STEFAN PFÄNDER, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg
PHILIP W. RUDD, Pittsburgh State University
TABEA SALZMANN, Universität Bremen
ANNE SCHRÖDER, Universität Bielefeld

Series Editor's Foreword

The series *Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact* (CALC) 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.

Exceptionally we publish anthologies that display a strong thematic unity, as in the case of the present volume: *Linguistic Ecology and Language Contact*, whose specific focus is ecological aspects of language contact. Its editors start it with an informative history of 'ecolinguistics' and 'ecology-of-language' approaches to various aspects of particular languages since the mid-twentieth century. Because the term *ecology* was borrowed directly from biology, where it has been in usage since the mid-nineteenth century, as the editors make so clear, they treat its application to linguistics as metaphorical. Thus they invite the reader, perhaps unwittingly but quite appropriately, to think over whether invocations of notion of *ecology* to account for linguistic behaviour should not be interpreted literally, in reference to the relevant environmental factors. Must the 'environment', the explanation typically associated with *ecology* (note its application in the word *environmentalist!*), be understood strictly in the sense of climate, vegetation, topography and other relevant geographic notions that bear on biological evolution? What then prompted linguist pioneers of the extrapolation of this notion, viz., Erving Goffman, Charles F. Voegelin, Florence M. Voegelin, Noel W. Schutz, and Einar I. Haugen, to consider applying it in linguistics? Aren't there any ways in which usage of

ecology in linguistics can inform its application in biology? I favor a broad interpretation of *ecology*, whose nature varies according to what it is invoked to explain, consistent with the interdisciplinary nature that the editors themselves advocate for ecological approaches to language (see below). But the reader will be the ultimate judge.

The different contributors to this volume articulate in their respective chapters various ecological factors that rolled the dice one way or another on the evolution of the structures of some languages they have investigated, the emergence of contact-induced ethnolinguistic practices in some colonial populations, or the unfolding of a conversation. In the latter case, attention is drawn to a fundamental aspect of contact: that which applies in our daily interactions with each other, even in a monolingual population. From the point of view of discourse, the exchange of ideas and points of views certainly involves contact, notwithstanding that of idiolects. And there is certainly an ecology that constrains how the conversation develops. The editors characterize the approach as 'ecological discourse analysis and interpretation'.

The reader is implicitly invited to think beyond traditional 'sociolinguistic' and/or 'ethnographic' factors in thinking 'ecological'. I have often underscored the impact of economic factors on linguistic practices and language vitality, which are part of the 'indirect external ecology', simply because their effects are mediated by the individuals that evolve in the relevant population or socioeconomic structures and react to them directly. However, is the term *ecology* simply an alternative that brings more breadth to non-structural factors that bear on the practice and evolution of languages but does not displace *sociolinguistics* and *ethnography*? I think so, but it's up to the reader to assess whether this volume leads to a different answer. One of the rather novel elements contributed by the editors is certainly the Husserlian part-whole and foundation perspective.

From the beginning, the reader is also invited to reflect on what practitioners of 'ecolinguistics' do that those of the 'ecology-of-language' approach do not, and vice versa, whether they all (can) claim the legacy of the practice of ecology in biology, and what has led them to diverge intellectually. Do 'ecolinguists' articulate the connection between language and the world, apparently that in which the social ecology is embedded, more adequately than those who practice the 'ecology of language'? Can one always tell the difference between these ecological paradigms in linguistics, or does the difference lie in what particular scholars are specifically interested in and focus on? The chapters in this book reveal that there is often a disconnect between the labels that individual scholars claim for their particular practices and the substance of what they do, showing that the difference may lie more in whether, for instance, one capitalizes on the moral consequences of the impact of particular ecological dynamics on the relevant languages, or on explaining

how those particular dynamics work. The contributions to this volume show the various ways in which the notion of LANGUAGE/LINGUISTIC ECOLOGY helps us better understand the manifold aspects of language contact, from the Levant to India, to Latin America, and to Black Africa, and from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Ecologically, or ecolinguistically, one can focus on synchronic or diachronic dynamics, on how various factors external to language influence the behaviours of speakers and what effects these adaptations of speakers exert on the structures, uses, and vitality of the relevant languages.

Then also arises the issue of the connection between the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis and ecolinguistics. This book includes two chapters by Peter Mühlhäusler, the promoter of the connection, on this topic. The reader may also want to follow the exchange between him and myself in the pages of the *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 30 (2015), if they are interested in my reservations about this aspect of ecolinguistics. At issue is, first, whether languages are tools for thought and influence the way that their speakers manage their geographic ecologies and, second, whether an ecolinguistic approach sheds (better) light on linguistic diversity and how. Can linguistic diversity hold a key to addressing, if not solving, some of the environmental problems the world faces today? The reader would be remiss to omit Mühlhäusler's chapters in the present book.

Though it is debatable whether all the contributions to this volume can be lumped in one category which the editors claim to be *ecological linguistics*, the latter are certainly correct in arguing that matters of the ecology of language cannot be reduced to 'socio-political, environmental and linguistic minority issues'. According to them, *ecological linguistics* also subsumes 'explicitly cognitive parameters such as speaker competence, language acquisition, and universal aspects of grammaticization'. They argue that 'corpora are considered to be the point of departure of any ecological linguistic analysis'. The question is whether corpora are all it takes to understand how languages behave and evolve; and these are considerations that should weigh heavily on the reader's mind if they want to make 'ecolinguistics', or 'the ecology of language', or 'ecological linguistics' more informative about various aspects of language. They must bear in mind that it is not so much the label that explains how things work as the substance of the explanations provided by the relevant scholars. And that is certainly not lacking from the present book.

However, one must also distinguish between the inaccurate explanations provided by individual analysts and the potential that a particular approach holds for providing adequate explanations, for instance, because it makes it possible for the practitioners to ask the right questions and suggests adequate research avenues for answering them. Thus one must consider more carefully the implications of the editors' claim that they 'consider language, primarily

language usage, as *part of a whole* (*Teilganzen*, according to Husserl) in a complex socio-historical-cultural system, which additionally is dependent on cognitive-neural cross-linking'. According to them, this volume offers a third, holistic kind of ecological approach to language (contact), which must be interdisciplinary and pluralistic, because no discipline alone can explain everything about it. Undoubtedly, ECOLOGY cannot subsume all explanations about every aspect of language; the message I got is that it enables linguists to address the actuation question in perhaps a more satisfactory way. The causation of change can be indirect, lying for instance in colonization, which imposes a new socio-economic structure, which in turn affects various ethnographic conditions that influence speakers' behaviours. The approach also makes it possible to deal with the non-structural aspect of complexity regarding the cultural embeddedness of language, which guides human behaviour. The editors submit that ECOLOGY must also be understood as complex and structured in a hierarchical fashion, within which history plays a very critical role, as its effects filter through several layers of ecological conditioning to the interacting individuals. These assertions contain a novel element on which the reader is well invited ponder against the backdrop the body of empirical data that the book provides.

The editors and other contributors to the book militate for giving up some old terminology they consider 'misleading', proposing terms such as *linguistic ecology* instead of *language ecology*, *copying* instead of *borrowing*, *code alternation* instead of *code-mixing/switching*, and *covert copy* instead of *calque*. Along with this preoccupation arises the question of what is a 'natural phenomenon' in linguistics and how does one capture it in their investigation. Is there such a thing as 'ecological data'? The reader is invited to assess this. Some chapters focus on the urban environment as a contact ecology, where individuals from different parts of a country bring different rural traditions that face the competition of others. They are modified by the emergent urban cultures, which they also help reshape, though the claim of an urban culture itself can be questioned, because of its peculiar population structure, which may prevent the emergence of homogeneous language practices shared by all. Population structure also accounts for the conditions under which a language of an elite minority can survive in an exogenous territory, such as French in the Levant, and for how long. It likewise accounts for how the Spaniards' naming practices of the seventeenth century spread, albeit with modification, in their insular colonies of the Caribbean and undoubtedly their other colonies. The dynamics of cultural competition are particularly noteworthy, as they are influenced by colonial politics. This is a thought-provoking collection of essays that we the editors of CALC are happy to share with our readers.

Salikoko S. Mufwene, University of Chicago

Acknowledgements

The impetus for this book dates back a few years already. As our contact person at Cambridge University Press, Helen Barton, recently put it, in polite but nevertheless growing impatience: ‘This book has a long history’. It goes back to discussions on linguistic ecology and language contact between Ralph Ludwig, Steve Pagel, and Peter Mühlhäusler in 2009, when the latter visited Halle again, and a few other guests were invited.

The book concept originated in a rather complex environment, in which the binational (DFG and ANR) research project ‘CIEL-F’ (Corpus International Écologique de la Langue Française) also played a firm role. The road was long enough to present and discuss our ideas on various occasions. Without naming all of them, we thank our many discussion partners for their attention and suggestions.

Our manuscript quickly took shape, and from the first moment on we had found a discussion partner who showed us that amity and relentless criticism are not mutually exclusive: Salikoko S. Mufwene. Sali’s impact on us and our book is perhaps comparable to that of the thinker-printer-publishers of the French sixteenth century, such as Geoffroy Tory or Robert and Henri Estienne. We owe him constancy, tenacity, tireless questioning, and concurrent support.

Commitment on the part of the editors for such a long period of time must be endured. Without substantive support from our wives, our undertaking would have been impossible to realize. We are indebted to Florence Bruneau-Ludwig, Jacky Mühlhäusler, and Franziska Schramm.

This book would also not have been completed without continuous support in the editing process, which came in particular from Susanne Vollmer.

Perhaps because we are forgetful, or because they are simply too many, we have named only a few friends and colleagues here. For this we want to apologize.