Language Contact

Sarah G. Thomason

University of Michigan

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is language contact?

On the Flathead Reservation in northwestern Montana, the remaining fluent speakers of Montana Salish—fewer than 60 tribal members as of 2000, almost all of them elders—speak Salish to each other. But they usually speak English when others are present, whether the others are outsiders or younger tribal members who speak little or no Salish. Describing this as a language contact situation requires no hard thinking. The same is true of the village of Kupwar in India, where extensive multilingualism has led to convergence among local dialects of two Indic languages (Marathi, Urdu) and one Dravidian language (Kannaḍa); of the Republic of Singapore, an island nation of just 238 square miles which boasts four official languages (Chinese, Malay, English, and Tamil); of the Aleuts who used to live on Bering Island off the east coast of Russia and speak Russian in addition to their native Aleut; and of innumerable other situations around the world. But although recognizing language contact in such obvious cases is easy, defining it precisely is more difficult, for several reasons.

In the simplest definition, language contact is the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time. It isn't hard to imagine a situation in which this definition might be too simple: for instance, if two groups of young travelers are speaking two different languages while cooking their meals in the kitchen of a youth hostel, and if each group

speaks only one language, and if there is no verbal interaction between the groups, then this is language contact only in the most trivial sense. The focus in this book will be on nontrivial language contact—that is, on contact situations in which at least some people use more than one language. As we will see, language contact in this substantive sense doesn't require fluent bilingualism or multilingualism, but some communication between speakers of different languages is necessary. If those two groups of travelers share a kitchen for two or three hours, they will almost surely try to say a few things to each other, and their efforts will be worth the attention of anyone interested in language contact.

Another problem with the simplest definition is deciding what we mean by 'language'. To a nonlinguist this usually presents no difficulty: if you can't understand someone you're trying to talk to, you will assume that he's speaking a different language. Not always, though. I have observed native speakers of American English having trouble talking to each other, not because of a few unfamiliar words, as when a teenager uses slang while talking to a grandparent, but because they spoke different dialects with significantly different sound patterns. In one case a North Carolinian was able to understand a Bostonian (maybe because John F. Kennedy was President of the U.S. at the time, so that all Americans had become used to hearing a Boston accent), but the Bostonian was hopelessly lost and frustrated. And yet everyone—laymen and experts alike—would agree that North Carolinians and Bostonians are speaking the same language, even if they do display some striking dialect differences.

The problem here is that the boundary between two dialects of a single language and two different languages is fuzzy. Given enough time and the right social circumstances, dialects will turn into separate languages, and during the transition process there is no sharp dividing line between 'possible to understand' and 'impossible to understand'—it's a matter of types of changes, conversational contexts, attitudes, and other complex linguistic and social factors. The fuzziness of this distinction won't cause serious difficulties for the

discussions in this book, because for the most part we will be looking at examples from clear cases of separate languages in contact. But readers should keep in mind that, although most of the analyses below apply equally to dialect contact and language contact, there are also some important differences; several of these will be pointed out in the relevant places.

The simplest definition is implicitly flawed in one other obvious way: speakers of two (or more) languages need not be in the same place for language contact to occur. Consider, for instance, the languages of sacred texts and other writings connected with major world religions. Christianity was responsible for the spread of Latin (and, to a lesser extent, New Testament Greek) to many countries; Pāli, the sacred language of Buddhism, spread with the religion to Thailand, Burma, and other Southeast Asian countries. The Koran (or, more precisely, Qur'ān), the sacred text of Islam, is written in Classical Arabic, but many of the world's Muslims do not speak any form of Arabic. Nevertheless, Classical Arabic is in contact with other languages in many parts of the world through the religion, as is attested by the sizable number of Arabic loanwords in various languages—among them Persian, Turkish, and Malay—that are spoken primarily by Muslims.

Contact without full bilingualism is not confined to religious languages. The most striking example in the modern world is the pervasiveness of English outside the traditionally English-speaking nations. Millions of non-English speakers have come into contact with English through radio, television, Hollywood films, popular music (on CDs and cassettes as well as on the radio and television), and writings of all kinds. Of course some English can be learned through these media, though the knowledge is likely to remain passive unless the listeners have opportunities to practice their speaking or writing skills.

The internet offers more possibilities for active long-distance language learning, and English is the main language on the international internet—so much so that the French government has tried to ban its use in electronic mail (email) communications in France! But

learning to write a language doesn't necessarily lead to an ability to speak it, so depending on how you define 'bilingualism', knowledge that is confined to the written language alone might not qualify. (A functional definition of bilingualism, according to which anyone who uses two languages is a bilingual, would include this case; a definition that insisted on full fluency in all of the traditional four skills—speaking, listening, reading, writing—would not. The functional definition makes more sense: as François Grosjean points out, a person who uses two languages regularly but is not fully fluent in both could hardly be labeled monolingual, but by the second definition of bilingualism, s/he would not qualify as bilingual either.)

What about the people in contact situations?

English and Arabic and the few other languages with worldwide distribution are the exceptions. Language contact most often involves face-to-face interactions among groups of speakers, at least some of whom speak more than one language in a particular geographical locality. Often they are neighbors, as in Switzerland, which is home to four groups whose languages (French, German, Italian, and Romansh) share national-language status. But in the Swiss case bilingualism is asymmetrical: speakers of Italian and Romansh, whose speakers are far outnumbered by the country's French and German speakers, usually speak French and/or German, while French and German speakers are unlikely to speak either Italian or Romansh. Moreover, most or all German speakers also speak French, and in addition they know both the distinctive Swiss German and (at least to some extent) Standard German. It is said to be fairly easy, however, to find monolingual speakers of French in Switzerland.

Neighboring speaker groups may be on friendly terms—sharing resources, engaging in trade, and providing mutual support—as when several small Native American tribes in and

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near the northwestern corner of the U.S. state of Montana used to band together in their annual journey eastward to hunt buffalo in the plains. Or they may be hostile to each other, as when those combined tribes were attacked by the nearby Blackfeet, in competition over the buffalo-hunting grounds.

Often individuals from one group join another, through such social practices as exogamy (marrying someone from outside your own ethnic group), slavery, immigration, and adopting captured enemy warriors to fill gaps created when some of your own warriors have been killed in battle. So, for instance, the Dhuwal of northern Australia ban intra-group marriage, which means that every child born to a Dhuwal speaker has one non-Dhuwal-speaking parent. The seasonal contacts in western Montana led to less institutionalized but still common intermarriages among the Montana Salish, Kutenai, Spokane, and Nez Percé tribes, among others. Slavery is unfortunately known from many parts of the world. In the Caribbean and some bordering coastal areas of North, Central, and South America, the enslavement of Africans by Europeans led eventually to the emergence of new mixed languages, called CRE-OLES; slavery was also practiced before and after European contact in Africa, the Americas, and other places around the world. But not all wars led exclusively to death or enslavement of the losers. The Delawares, who once lived in what is now the northeastern United States, kept their ranks of warriors filled by adopting enemies captured in battle. And especially since Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal (1394-1460) launched the Age of Exploration, language contact has resulted from the immigration of individuals and families to new territories. Chapter 2 will survey a sampling of these situations in more detail.

Sometimes speakers of two or more languages live together in a single community. In such cases there may be mutual bilingualism or multilingualism, as in the village of Kupwar in Maharashtra, India, where almost all the men speak at least two of the village's four languages (Kannaḍa, Urdu, Marathi, and Telugu). Alternatively, there may be asymmetrical

bilingualism. In Ireland, for instance, most or all adults who speak Irish Gaelic also speak English, but not vice versa; the same is true, though not to the same degree, of Spanish and English speakers in a city like Los Angeles—native speakers of Spanish are much more likely to be bilingual than native speakers of English are. And, to take a truly extreme example, all native speakers of Montana Salish also speak English with native-like fluency, but not a single nontribal English speaker can speak Montana Salish fluently. (This does not mean that no one of European origin has ever spoken the language fluently, however. A linguistically gifted mid-19th-century Jesuit missionary from Italy, Father Gregory Mengarini, was said to have become so fluent in Salish that he could pass for a native speaker in the dark, when he couldn't be seen.) Asymmetrical bilingualism is especially common when, as in these cases, a subordinate bilingual group is shifting to the language of a monolingual dominant group.

Bilingualism may be stable, as (apparently) in Kupwar, where the patterns of multilingualism are of long standing; or transitional, as on the Flathead reservation, where English/Salish bilingualism looks like a stage on the way to English monolingualism. In these and other cases of contact, an important factor in predicting whether a dominant language will sweep the minority languages off the map is whether or not there is institutional support for the non-dominant language(s). Irish Gaelic has institutional support, for instance, and so do all four of the national languages of Switzerland—although Romansh, at least, is losing speakers in Switzerland in spite of its status as one of the country's four national languages, a fact that underlines the point that institutional support is not a guarantee of stability. Spanish in the U.S. has some institutional support (e.g. in the Constitutional free speech amendment and the Bilingual Education Act), but Montana Salish has very little. The languages of Kupwar all have strong support in the patterns of social interaction in the community. The issue of stable vs. unstable contact situations, of language maintenance (in which a group keeps its language in a contact situation) vs. language (in which a group shifts

from its language to another language) in a contact setting, will be discussed in Chapter 2.

In communities of all sizes, from the tiniest villages to the biggest nations, language contact (which is itself a result of social history) has social consequences. Sometimes these consequences are benign or advantageous. In Paraguay, for instance, the indigenous language Guaraní is spoken alongside Spanish by the majority of the population, and both Guaraní and Spanish are considered national languages. The people of Paraguay are proud of their bilingualism: Spanish is ordinary in Latin America, but Guaraní is their unique possession. (The history of this contact is less benign, however; other indigenous languages of Paraguay vanished because their speakers were pressured by European missionaries to learn Guaraní instead.)

But since homo sapiens is not a peaceable species, it isn't surprising that the social effects of language contact are sometimes painful or even lethal. In many such cases the language of a minority culture is used by a dominant culture as a marker of cultural differentness: not only does it provide a means of identifying the people to be discriminated against, but it also offers a target for discrimination. Two or three generations ago, as part of the federal government's policy dictating cultural assimilation, Salish-speaking children in Montana were beaten for speaking their home language instead of English in the boarding schools; and during the apartheid era in South Africa, the use of various indigenous African languages as the medium of instruction in elementary schools for Blacks was encouraged in order to prevent most Black Africans from acquiring a a single shared language and thus to diminish the risk of organized revolution.

Most nations have official languages. On the one hand, citizens who don't know the national language(s) often have trouble getting access to governmental services; on the other hand, citizens who know more than one national (or international) language may have an easier time finding employment than their linguistically less agile compatriots.

In chapter 3 we will examine a few of the many ways in which people interact in different kinds of contact situations.

How old is language contact?

Languages have been in contact certainly for thousands of years, and probably since the beginning of humankind—or at least very close to the beginning, as soon as humans spoke more than one language. (Not surprisingly, no date can be given for this starting point: it might have been 100,000 years ago, or 200,000 years ago, or even longer ago. With recent archaeological evidence pushing human habitation of regions like Australia back beyond 50,000 years, the beginning seems increasingly remote.) Even in situations where, at a relatively recent time, people moved into territories that previously lacked a human presence, such as the Americas and Oceania, not all the languages were spoken in isolation: as groups of people spread out into new regions, some of them also maintained contacts with other groups for purposes of trade and finding spouses—as modern groups are known to have done long before coming under the influence of European and Arab explorers and colonizers.

Once we move out of prehistory into history (which begins with the invention of writing in ancient Sumer in the fourth millennium BCE), we find reports of language contacts in historical records of and about all human cultures. The Gilgamesh Cycle, a famous Babylonian epic poem dating from the second millennium BCE, had its origin in an earlier Sumerian epic which spread not only to Babylon (where it was partly translated and partly adapted in the ancient Semitic language Akkadian) but also to other ancient Near Eastern cultures and languages, among them the Hurrians and the Indo-European-speaking Hittites. Other ancient language contacts are attested in bilingual inscriptions that, in the most dramatic cases, helped scholars decipher long-unused writing systems such as cuneiform (wedge-shaped

groups of symbols pressed by a stylus into clay tablets). The best-known bilingual inscription is on the Rosetta Stone, which dates from 196 BCE and contains three versions of the same text—Egyptian hieroglyphics, demotic (cursive) Egyptian symbols, and Greek—and which was the key to deciphering the hieroglyphics.

Still other ancient and examples are explicit mentions of language contact. So, for instance, Darius the Great (550-486 BCE), who ruled the Persian Empire from 522 to 486 BCE, wrote in his autobiography that, in addition to cuneiform writings in Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian, 'I made inscriptions in other ways, in Aryan, which was not done before.' ('Aryan' would perhaps have been an Indic language. Darius's "autobiography" was actually written by a ghostwriter, but the comment is still interesting.) Another comment, this one about contact-induced language change, was made by Herodotus (in *The Persian Wars*, 5th century BCE); see the beginning of Chapter 4 for the quotation, which is about the altered version of Scythian spoken by the offspring of Amazons and Scythian men. This may be the first recorded mention of language shift—the shift, by a person or a group, from the native language to a second language—and also of contact as a cause of language change. A close second, or possibly even a tie with Herodotus for first, is in the Old Testament of the Bible, in the Book of Nehemiah (13:23-24): 'In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.' This passage certainly seems to refer to language change, and it also refers to a process of language shift within the community, provided that one equates the fathers' language with the community's language. (The chronology, relative to Herodotus, is hard to establish. Herodotus lived ca. 485-425 BCE. Nehemiah served either King Artaxerxes I of Persia [465-424 BCE] or King Artaxerxes II [404-359 BCE]; Biblical scholars believe that certain passages of the Book of Nehemiah belong instead to the Book of Ezra, and this

passage is a good candidate, since Chapter 10 of the Book of Ezra also concerns the 'strange wives' taken by Jewish men. In any case, these Old Testament books were probably not written earlier than Herodotus.)

More recent examples can easily be found in histories and biographies from all eras. Several of the great medieval Arab geographers comment disparagingly on foreigners' efforts to speak and write Arabic. Examples can be found in Ibn Khaldun (d. 1405), who refers to verses written in 'very bad Arabic' by Berbers who were 'insufficiently instructed'; and in Abu al-Bakrī (ca. 1028-1094 CE), who cites a traveler's account of the bad Arabic spoken by non-Arabs in a town called Maridi, outside the area where most native speakers of Arabic then lived (it was probably located either in Upper Egypt or in the Saharan Desert in present-day Mauritania). And in Europe near the end of the 16th century, when Latin had already lost its position as the main language of international diplomacy in Europe, Queen Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603, reigned 1558-1603) impressed her courtiers, and no doubt her victim as well, with her fluent Latin denunciation of a Polish ambassador who had offended her. This story attests not only to the queen's solid education but also to the then-current status of Latin as a spoken language—spoken, that is, exclusively as a second language, and usually called neo-Latin, for Latin had evolved into the various Romance languages long before 1600.

It is important to keep in mind that written records typically document only societies in which writing is used. The tradition of recording information about unlettered societies, though venerable enough to go back at least as far as Herodotus, is a minor theme in the history of written language. The trickle of information increased in volume when travelers and missionaries followed explorers into the far corners of the world, but it became a flood—relatively speaking—only with the emergence of modern anthropology in the 20th century. As a result, societies with no written tradition of their own are seen primarily through the eyes of majority cultures, and this circumstance limits our understanding of language

contacts among other peoples, especially before the 20th century. Nevertheless, more than enough information is available to show that extensive and intricate language contacts, with far-reaching social, political, and linguistic effects, are a constant feature of the human condition, not a phenomenon that is limited to large, recent, militarily prominent, and/or technologically advanced societies.

Where is language contact?

Language contact is everywhere: there is no evidence that any languages have developed in total isolation from other languages. Occasionally we see newspaper headlines like 'Ancient Stone Age Tribe Discovered', accompanied by articles claiming that some group has had no contact with other groups (and therefore no contact with other groups' languages). A much-discussed recent case is that of the Tasaday, a small band of people who, when Western journalists and anthropologists were first introduced to them in 1972, were living in a remote Philippine rain forest apparently untouched by modern civilization. The case later became highly controversial, with claims that their lives were primitive opposed by counterclaims that the whole story was a hoax. Certainly 'Stone Age' was an exaggeration, because the band's language is closely related to neighboring Philippine languages, so closely that the language must have diverged from its nearest relatives sometime within the past millennium. But the claim of relatively long isolation from other groups found support in a linguistic analysis carried out by the anthropologist Carol Molony. The language of the Tasaday, she pointed out, has almost no loanwords from Sanskrit, Chinese, Spanish, or English, unlike other Philippine languages; and it has almost no words referring to agriculture, which also suggests lack of contact with the languages of their farmer neighbors over a considerable period of time. To achieve this result in an invented language, a hoaxer would have had to

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be extremely knowledgeable about modern linguistics, and the prime suspect had no such knowledge. He would also have had to teach a sizable group of people to use his invented language constantly around outsiders, and no one who has visited the Tasaday has reported any lapses in their use of the language they say is their own. But in any case, the language of the Tasaday does have a few words borrowed from other languages, and their isolation (if real) stretches over a period of two hundred years at most.

Other popular candidates for developed-in-isolation status either evaporate on close inspection or remain controversial because of the complexity of their histories. One of the latter type is also one of the most-discussed examples: Icelandic, which is often said to have been isolated from other Germanic Scandinavian languages after the Norse settled Iceland in the 9th century. Aside from the remoteness of the island itself, the argument is based on the fact that the Icelandic literary language appears more archaic than the literary languages of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, which (so the argument goes) suggests that the absence of contact led to a slower rate of change than in more cosmopolitan languages. But contact between Iceland and mainland Scandinavia was never cut off. Ships traveled back and forth with supplies for the island, and although the degree of isolation was quite sufficient to produce divergence into a distinct Icelandic language, it was not complete. The archaic features of Standard Icelandic are no doubt due in part to the relatively great degree of isolation from other languages, but they are also in part a result of the process by which the language was standardized: the creators of Standard Icelandic deliberately archaized the language's structure, making it look older so as to bring it closer to the language of the Eddas, the celebrated medieval mythological poems of Iceland.

Of course language contacts are more intense in some places at some times than elsewhere and at other times. Speakers of Montana Salish have been under such extreme social and economic pressure to shift to English over the past few generations that their language is

seriously endangered; in sharp contrast, a great many English speakers, especially in the United States, see no reason to learn any other language, because they can easily live at home and travel throughout the world using only English. Intense pressure from a dominant group most often leads to bilingualism among subordinate groups who speak other languages, and this asymmetrical bilingualism very often results, sooner or later, in language shift: most Native Americans in the United States, and most immigrant groups as well, have shifted to English. This pattern is repeated in many places throughout the world. The Irish have mostly shifted from Irish Gaelic to English, most Australian Aboriginals have shifted to English, all ethnic Ainus in Japan have shifted from Ainu to Japanese, most Livonians in Latvia have shifted from the Uralic language of their ethnic heritage to the Indo-European language Latvian, most Suba speakers in Kenya have shifted to Luo (the language of the numerically dominant group in their region), and so forth.

Other language contacts are more stable, with both (or all) languages being maintained, at least over the short run. English and Spanish appear to be in a sort of equilibrium in parts of Florida and California, for instance, though this may be only apparent, especially in California. There and in some (most?) other Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S., the common three-generation immigrant linguistic pattern holds—immigrants monolingual in the home-country language, their offspring bilingual, and then the third generation monolingual in English—but the number of Spanish speakers remains more or less constant, thanks to the constant influx of new immigrants. The contact between Spanish and Guaraní in Paraguay, where both are official national languages, has been balanced for a very long time. Here too, however, the current situation may in fact be unstable: urbanization and industrialization of the country seem to be causing a swing toward language shift, from Guaraní/Spanish bilingualism to Spanish monolingualism, in spite of the population's continuing loyalty to Guaraní. In many other ex-European colonies, too, the languages of

former colonial powers are still used in addition to indigenous languages. Among the best-known examples are English in India, French in Zaire, and English in the Philippines. (The Philippines were under Spanish rule for over three hundred years, but as there were never many Spanish speakers outside urban areas, knowledge of Spanish didn't spread far. By contrast, English was widely and successfully promoted by the Americans, who made it the sole medium of instruction in public schools early in the 20th century.) Long-term contacts without large-scale shift are common in noncolonial situations too: Kupwar is one example, Montana Salish in relation to neighboring Native American languages is another (before they all declined as a result of Anglo intrusions), the four national languages of Switzerland have been in place for centuries, and the many languages of northern Australia, Dhuwal and its neighbors, have apparently been in contact for millennia.

The conclusion is clear: language contact is the norm, not the exception. We would have a right to be astonished if we found any language whose speakers had successfully avoided contacts with all other languages for periods longer than one or two hundred years.

What happens to languages in contact?

The various linguistic results of language contact form the core of this book (chapters 4-9). The general topic can be viewed as a hierarchical set of typologies, starting with a three-way division at the top level into contact-induced language change, extreme language mixture (resulting in pidgins, creoles, and bilingual mixed languages), and language death. Chapter 4 lays out the typologies in detail and, together with Chapter 5, explores the predictors of kinds and degrees of contact-induced change; Chapter 6 examines the mechanisms of contact-induced change. Pidgins and creoles are discussed in Chapter 7, bilingual mixed languages in Chapter 8, and the three main linguistic routes to language death in Chapter

9. Here I will give a preliminary sketch of some of the major topics to be covered later.

The most common result of language contact is change in some or all of the languages: typically, though not always, at least one of the languages will exert at least some influence on at least one of the other languages. And the most common specific type of influence is the borrowing of words. English, for instance, is notorious for having a huge number of loanwords—by some estimates up to 75% of its total vocabulary, mostly taken from French and Latin. A large proportion of these loanwords flooded into the language some time after the Normans conquered England in 1066, bringing their French language along with them. The loanwords do not prove that 11th-century contact between English and French was more intensive than, say, present-day contact between English and Montana Salish in Montana, because speakers of some languages borrow more words than speakers of others, even where levels of bilingualism are more or less equivalent. Certainly thousands of loanwords can't get into a language without contact, so the vocabulary of English provides incontrovertible evidence of former close contact with French. But the implications of loanword evidence are asymmetrical: the presence of numerous loanwords is a sure sign of contact with the donor language, but the absence of numerous loanwords does not necessarily point to lack of contact. Montana Salish, for example, has borrowed some words from English, but not very many; instead, when speakers want to refer in Salish to items borrowed from Anglo culture, they tend to construct new words out of Salish components. So, to take just one of many examples, the Montana Salish word *p'ip'úyšn* 'automobile' literally means 'wrinkled feet' (or, more precisely, 'it has wrinkled feet'), a name derived from the appearance of the tire tracks. In fact, this aspect of Montana Salish speakers' linguistic behavior may be an areal feature characteristic of the Northwest region of the United States and Canada; the Sahaptian language Nez Percé of Oregon, Idaho, and Washington also also has few loanwords, and many years ago the great linguist Edward Sapir commented that Athabaskan languages

tend not to borrow words from European languages.

It's not just words that get borrowed: all aspects of language structure are subject to transfer from one language to another, given the right mix of social and linguistic circumstances. Asia Minor Greek, to take just one example, has a great many borrowings from Turkish at all levels of its structure. In the most dazzling cases, mixed languages have apparently been created by bilinguals as a symbol of their emerging ethnic identity. Two examples are Michif (spoken in North Dakota and a few other places in the western U.S. and Canada), which combines French noun phrases with verb phrases from the Algonquian language Cree, and Mednyj Aleut (formerly spoken on one of Russia's Commander Islands), which is basically Aleut but with numerous Russian loanwords and a massive replacement of Aleut verb endings with Russian verb morphology.

Of course most cases of one-way or mutual influence on languages in contact situations are more prosaic, but in these too it is easy to find transfer in all areas of language structure—phonology (sound systems), morphology (word structure), syntax (sentence structure), and lexical semantics. Latvian, for instance, has been influenced by Livonian in both phonology and morphology: its complex accent system was replaced by fixed stress on the first syllable in the word, and one dialect has lost masculine vs. feminine vs. neuter gender distinctions, which are lacking in Livonian and other Uralic languages. Another Uralic language, Finnish, has switched from typically Uralic Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order to a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) pattern, under the influence of neighboring Indo-European languages. Examples like these can be multiplied endlessly; and when human creativity comes into play, there are no discernible linguistic limits to the possibilities for transferring any linguistic feature from one language to another.

In some new contact situations the groups in contact do not learn each other's languages, either because they don't want to or because they lack sufficient opportunity to do so, or

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both. In such a situation a contact language may emerge, a pidgin (if it arises as a strictly secondary language, used for limited purposes) or a creole (if it arises in the first instance as the main language of a community). The vocabulary of the new language will usually, though not always, be derived primarily from the language of one prominent group in the contact situation—a European language, in the classic trade pidgins that sprang up on coasts visited by European explorers several centuries ago, and also in the pidgins and creoles that arose through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. By contrast, the grammars of pidgins and creoles that arise in multilingual contexts are not derived from the grammar of any single language, but appear instead to be a combination of features shared by the languages in contact and features that are universally preferred, perhaps because they are relatively easy to learn.

What else happens to languages in contact? As we have already seen, one common outcome is the disappearance of one of the languages. In all but a few tragic cases this happens when all its speakers shift to another language; the other possibility is that the language disappears because all its speakers die, when they are massacred by (say) hostile invaders or when they succumb to natural disasters or to foreign diseases imported by less directly lethal intruders. Depending on how rapidly a process of group shift is completed, and on less tangible factors such as speaker attitudes, the language that is being shifted away from may or may not undergo the type of overall change that has come to be known as attrition—the loss of vocabulary and simplification of structure without any compensating additions in the form of borrowings or newly created structure. Many immigrant languages in the United States, for instance American Hungarian, are undergoing attrition as their speaker groups shrink; but in Montana Salish, as in many other Native American languages, the drastic reduction in number of speakers has not been accompanied by any grammatical simplification (though there is vocabulary loss because most present-day tribal elders can no longer remember the Salish names of certain formerly important plants and other aspects of

traditional culture). The third linguistic route to language death, a very rare one as far as we know, occurs when the speakers of a threatened language stubbornly resist total cultural and linguistic assimilation—but, under very strong linguistic (and other cultural) pressure from a dominant group, they replace more and more of their original language's structure until at last it retains only some vocabulary and a few structural remnants of their pre-contact language. This is in fact another way in which extreme language mixture occurs, as we will see in Chapter 8.

We will look more closely at all these linguistic results of language contact in chapters 4-9. The book concludes with a brief survey of language endangerment, a topic which is of great concern to modern linguists, many of whom are watching with dismay as the languages they study and admire vanish forever.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

The classic general study in this field is Uriel Weinreich's *Languages in Contact* (first published in 1953, reprinted in 1968). More recent general works are John Edwards, *Multilingualism* (1994) and several books on the closely related topic of bilingualism, especially François Grosjean's 1982 book *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism* and Suzanne Romaine's *Bilingualism* (2nd edition, 1995). A major recent encyclopedic treatment of the subject, edited by Hans Goebl, Peter H. Nelde, Zdeněk Starý, and Wolfgang Wölck, is *Kontaktlinguistik/Contact linguistics/Linquistique de contact: ein internationales Handbuch zeitgenössischer Forschung/an international handbook of contemporary research/manuel international des recherches contemporaines* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997).

Case studies of especially interesting contact situations can be found in many books and in linguistics and anthropology journals; examples are found in this book's list of references. David Crystal's wonderful book *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* has a fine discussion of the problem of deciding what a language is (pp. 284-285). For a systematic discussion of interactions among dialects of the same language, see Peter Trudgill's book *Dialects in Contact* (1986). The linguistic sections of the book you're reading, especially in Chapters 4, 7, and 8, follow to a large extent (though not completely) the framework presented in Sarah Thomason & Terrence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (1988).

François Grosjean discusses definitions of bilingualism in *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism*, especially pp. 230-236; his comment about the non-necessity of full fluency for bilingualism is on p. 232. I am grateful to Charlotte Schaengold (personal communication, 1999) for comments on the probable levels of German and French bilingualism in Switzerland. See Jeffrey Heath, *Linguistic Diffusion in Arnhem Land* (1978), for discussion of exogamy among the Dhuwal and other circumstances of intimate language contact. John J. Gumperz & Robert Wilson, in their 1971 article 'Convergence and creolization: a case from the Indo-Aryan/Dravidian border', discuss the case of Kupwar in India. The Sumerian example comes from Samuel Noah Kramer's fascinating book *History begins at Sumer: Thirty-nine firsts in man's recorded history* (1981). The example from Darius the Great's autobiography is from Olmstead 1948 (*History of the Persian Empire*, p. 116), and the Arabic examples are from Ibn Khaldun and Abu al-Bakrī, respectively; see Thomason & Elgibali 1986 and Owens 1997 for discussion of al-Bakrī's comments. For a summary of the Tasaday controversy, see the 1997 commentary on Lawrence A. Reid's website, and for more detailed analyses see *The Tasaday Controversy*, ed. by Thomas N. Headland (1991). Guaraní/Spanish bilingualism in Paraguay is the topic of Joan Rubin's 1968 book *National*

bilingualism in Paraguay, and current trends are discussed in a 1996 article by Yolanda Russinovich Solé, 'Language, affect and nationalism in Paraguay'.

For a case study on the shift from the Bantu language Suba to the Nilotic language Luo, see Franz Rottland & Duncan Okoth Okombo, 'Language shift among the Suba of Kenya' (1992, in Matthias Brenzinger, ed., *Language Death: Factual and Theoretical Explorations with Special Reference to East Africa*); this book also has several other interesting East African case studies. Edward Sapir's comment on Athabaskan non-borrowing is in his book *Language* (1921). I am grateful to Beatriz Lorente for providing information about contacts with English and Spanish in the Philippines. The most impressive study of Turkish influence on Asia Minor Greek is R. M. Dawkins' admirable book *Modern Greek in Asia Minor* (1916). See Sarah Thomason, ed., *Contact Languages: A Wider Perspective* (1997) for case studies on Michif (by Peter Bakker & Robert Papen), and Mednyj Aleut (by Sarah Thomason), as well as studies of eight other contact languages.

Bernard Comrie, in *The Languages of the Soviet Union* (1981), discusses Liv(onian) influence on Latvian. Anna Fenyvesi, in 'Language Contact and Language Death in an Immigrant Language: The Case of Hungarian' (1995), analyzes changes in a dying variety of American Hungarian. For a general book with valuable case studies on language death, see Nancy Dorian, ed., *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death* (1989). Dell Hymes' edited book *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages* (1971) is still an excellent source on pidgins and creoles; there are also good recent books, most notably John Holm's two-volume work *Pidgins and Creoles* (1988 and 1989) and Jacques Arends, Pieter Muysken, & Norval Smith, eds., *Pidgins and Creoles: An Introduction* (1995).