PART III

APPROACHES FROM CONTACT AND TYPOLOGY
GUIDE TO PART III

Part III concerns approaches from language contact and typology. Since contact is a driving force for typological change, there is a strong link between them (highlighted by the presence of chapters on creolization in both sections of this part (47, 53)). Both contact and typology have been studied for half a century, but largely as fields of research separate from each other and from the history of English. The chapters in Part III seek to integrate the two fields directly into the history of English.

The first group of chapters, coordinated by Raymond Hickey (37), focuses on three phases of contact: (1) contact in the early periods (chapters 38–41 by Hickey, Lutz, Machan, Pahta); (2) more recent contact in urban North America, Africa, and South-East Asia (42–44 by Boberg, Deumert and Mesthrie, Lim and Ansaldo); and (3) varieties of English worldwide (45–47 by E. Schneider, Sharma, Winford). A link to Chinese sound features in Chinese and East Asian Englishes is associated with chapter 45.

The second group of chapters, coordinated by Bernd Kortmann (48), concerns a wide spectrum of typological shifts from word order (Hawkins, 49) to use of pronouns (Laitinen, 50), and changes in syntheticity and analyticity in the lexicon (Haselow, 51) and in morphology (Szmrecsanyi, 52). A. Schneider (53) presents characteristics of the noun phrase in English-based pidgins and creoles, and Wichmann and Urban (54) introduce a new computational methodology for determining relationships among varieties of English. A step-by-step account of the process of the methodology used is linked with chapter 54.

Closely related chapters in other parts of the volume include Mukherjee and Schilk (14) on variation in New Englishes as evidenced by the International Corpus of English (ICE), Cameron (27) on English as a global commodity, and Sharma and Wiltshire (61) on continua and clines in the development of New Englishes.

Related resources on the website for both sections include a link to a recently established open access website of the electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English (eWAVE), which maps morphosyntactic variation among 74 varieties of English, including 26 English-based pidgins and creoles. There are also maps showing the colonial spread of Irish English (a), Englishes in the Northern and Southern hemispheres in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (b), Anglophone pidgins and creoles (c), and Englishes in South-East Asia (d) and Africa (e).
Language contact
1. Introduction

The topic of this group of chapters—language contact—as opposed to that of most other sections in this volume is one that has been investigated almost as long as linguistics has existed as a scientific discipline. However, in recent years contact has been the object of increased attention by scholars working on both the history of English and varieties of English worldwide. There are several reasons for this activity. The sheer number of nonnative speakers of English (Kachru 1990) has demanded that their language be investigated and related to native forms of English. Many scholars have been working on English in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific region, all of them sharing the desire to receive recognition for English on a global scale (Kirkpatrick 2010), irrespective of whether it has arisen due to colonial settlement (Hickey 2004; Schneider 2007), language shift from indigenous languages (Ansaldo 2009), or from the use of English in specific domains of society (Bolton 2003). Details of the issues and insights of those concerned with the English language in Asia and Africa can be gleaned from chapters in this group, see Deumert and Mesthrie (43), Lim and Ansaldo (44), E. Schneider (45), and Sharma (46).

Along with investigations of English in the regions just mentioned, there has been much ongoing research into pidgins and creoles (Winford, 47), a field in which language contact has always been a focus of research given that pidgins are
auxiliary languages and that creoles are new languages arising in complex linguistic environments (Siegel 1987; Migge 2003; Holm 2004).

The role of language contact in the history of English is a different matter. The received wisdom with scholars in mainstream English historical studies, since its establishment in the nineteenth century, has been that contact between English and other languages was largely confined to Latin, Scandinavian, and French. One might wonder why different forms of language contact in the history of English were not an object of interest in the latter half of the twentieth century when historical studies burgeoned to a degree unprecedented before. An explanation might be that the energies of younger scholars in recent decades have been concentrated on such research paradigms as generative linguistics, grammaticalization, historical pragmatics, and the exploitation of text corpora for tracing language change. Where scholars did indeed concern themselves with language contact, see the English-data contributions in Fisiak (1995), as well as Kastovsky and Mettinger (2001), the focus was not so much on opening up new scenarios for contact in the history of English but on making certain additions to the body of scholarship on already accepted cases. Some of these investigations were, however, quite radical (e.g. Wright 2005, which examines the mixture of English, Latin, and French in medieval business writings). Indeed, studies of code-switching are particularly vibrant today, see the contributions by Machan (40) and Pahta (41) for details. Another basic reassessment can be found in treatments of the contact relationship between Celtic and early English (Hickey, 38).

Most language contact studies that have appeared in recent years rely on databases different from those commonly used in histories of English. For example, Ansaldo (2009) scrutinizes contact in Asia, Winford (2003, 2005) deals with various kinds of contact, above all that found with pidgins and creoles, and Myers-Scotton (2002) examines a broad range of issues, including code-switching. Van Coetsem (2000), Thomason (2001), and Matras (2009) are overviews written by scholars outside English studies, while Hickey (2010a) is a collection dealing with contact across a wide spectrum of languages and locations. Mention should also be made of the treatment of language contact accorded in handbooks of historical linguistics, such as McMahon (1994), McColl-Millar (2007), and Campbell (2004).

1.1 Terminology

There are established terms in contact studies that are not always used with the same meanings by all authors so that it is advisable to offer some clarification before embarking on further discussion.

(1) **Borrowing.** Items/structures are copied from language X to language Y, but without speakers of Y shifting to X. In this simple form, borrowing is characteristic of “cultural” contact (e.g. Latin and English in the history of the latter, or English and other European languages today). Such borrowings are almost exclusively confined to words and phrases.
(2) **Transfer.** During language shift, when speakers of language X are switching to language Y, they transfer features of their original native language X to Y. Where these features are not present in Y they represent an innovation. For grammatical structures one can distinguish (i) categories and (ii) their realizations, either or both of which can be transferred.

(3) **Convergence.** A feature in language X has an internal source (i.e. there is a systemic motivation for the feature within language X), and the feature is present in a further language Y with which X is in contact. Both internal and external sources “converge” to produce the same result as with the progressive form in English (Hickey, 38).

### 2. Contact and contact settings

It would seem that language contact always induces change. History does not provide instances of speech communities that adjoined one another, still less ones that intermingled, where the languages of each community remained unaffected by the contact. However, there may well be a difference in the degree to which languages in contact influence each other. Furthermore, influence may vary by level of language and depend on the nature of the contact, especially on whether bilingualism exists and to what degree (individual and/or societal) and for what duration.

#### 2.1 Language-internal versus contact factors

In the current context language-internal change is understood as that which occurs within a speech community, among monolingual speakers, and contact-induced change as that which is induced by interfacing with speakers of a different language.

Opinions are divided on when to assume contact as the source of change. Some authors insist on the primacy of internal factors (e.g. Lass and Wright 1986) and so favor these when the scales of probability are not biased in either direction for any instance of change. Other scholars view contact reasons more favorably (Vennemann 2002) while still others would like to see a less dichotomous view of internal versus external factors in change (Dorian 1993; Jones and Esch 2002).

The fate of explanations based on language contact has varied in recent linguistic literature. During the 1980s many linguists reacted negatively to apparently superficial contact explanations (e.g. Harris 1984). Others, such as Lass (1997), have been consistently skeptical of contact explanations, stressing the coherent internal structure of languages and assuming by default that this is the locus of new features. This position has also been theoretically contested (see Filppula 2003), as it is unproven that language-internal factors take automatic precedence over contact in language change.
Another point needs to be highlighted: at best contact accounts for a phenomenon but does not explain why this should have arisen in the first place. Contact treatments tend to push sources back a step, but not to explain ultimate origins. Rather contact seeks to account for how features come about. “Account” is a more muted term and does not raise expectations of high degrees of adequacy implied by “explanation” (Hickey 2010b).

It would be blind to neglect the possible language-internal arguments for various features suspected of having a contact source. If internal arguments are considered and then deemed insufficient on their own, this actually strengthens the contact case, as contact is then seen as a necessary contributory factor to account fully for the appearance of features. Ultimately, contact accounts depend for acceptance on whether scholars are convinced by what they know about contact scenarios in general, specific contact in the case being discussed, possible alternative accounts and the crucial balance of internal and external factors.

Given that both language-internal and contact sources are available to speakers, it might be fair to postulate that no matter what the likelihood of transfer through contact, language internal factors can always play a role. It is the nature and rate of change which can be influenced by contact, a factor which can vary in intensity.

2.2 The locus of contact: Bilingual individuals?

It is a convenient shorthand to claim, for example, that language X borrowed from language Y. However, the appearance of borrowings in a speech community can only be the result of actions by individual members. If one puts aside cases of “cultural” borrowings (e.g. from Latin or Greek into later European languages or from English into other modern languages), then it is probably true that the borrowing of “systemic” material—inflections, grammatical forms, sentence structures—occurs via bilinguals. This view has a considerable tradition. Weinreich (1953) saw the locus of contact-induced change in the bilingual individual who moves between two linguistic systems. Some scholars go further and consider bilinguals as having a single system, for example, Matras (2010: 66–67) who contends that bilinguals “do not, in fact, organise their communication in the form of two ‘languages’ or ‘linguistic systems’”. The awareness of linguistic systems on the part of speakers is a difficult issue to resolve. It may well be that in prehistory, and in nonliterate societies today, the awareness of the separateness of languages was less than at present. If one or both of the languages a bilingual uses is the sole language of a country, then the bilingual’s awareness of switching between languages increases. Matras (ibid.) maintains that bilinguals “operate on the basis of established associations between a subset of structures and a set of interaction contexts”. Whatever the degree of awareness by bilinguals of the separateness of their linguistic (sub)systems, the presence of at least partial competence in two languages fulfills the precondition for the adoption of material from one language into another. The next, and crucial, question is how borrowings, made on an
individual level, spread throughout a community and are accepted by it. This step is essential for borrowings/items of transfer to become part of a language/variety as a whole and hence be passed on to later generations as established features. The type of bilingualism in a society—“equal” or “unequal”—is of relevance here (Winford 2003: 33–37).

2.3 Code-switching and borrowing
Assuming that code-switching refers to instances where bilingual speakers alternate between codes within the same speech event (Winford 2003: 103), one can postulate that this process is the source of borrowing when the code-switching occurs repeatedly with the same lexical items or sentence structures such that these are no longer felt to be “foreign” in the receiving code. The degree of bilingualism that is necessary for code-switching is a matter of debate as is the number of individuals who engage in code-switching. If their number is small but consists of high-status persons, then the items attained via code-switching can spread throughout the receiving speech community. The view that code-switching is the source of borrowed items is widely held in the field (Myers-Scotton 2002: 299). More information on code-switching can be found in the chapters by Machan (40) and Pahta (41).

2.4 Permeability of linguistic systems
There is nothing in the structure of a language that is excluded from borrowing/transfer through contact. Given sufficient intensity and duration, all linguistic subsystems can be affected, even the core morphology. Nonetheless, there are areas of language that show much greater movement in a contact situation. Single words and phrases, as well as pragmatic markers and sentence adverbials, are borrowed easily (e.g. English well, just, anyway used in Present-Day Irish). The reason is clear: such elements do not require integration into the grammatical system of the borrowing language and can be accommodated without any restructuring. In a language shift situation syntactic variation can occur as a result of transfer during the shift phase, often due to the desire to reach equivalents to grammatical categories and structures of the outset language not present in the target.

2.5 Language shift situations
Transfer to a target language during shift is distinct from that occurring with contact not entailing shift. During shift, transfer is determined by structural expectations of speakers of the outset language, which may or may not be fulfilled in the target language. Hence, features can appear in the shift variety that are not present in inherited varieties of the same language. This transfer is particularly common in situations of adult second language acquisition in nonprescriptive environments.
2.5.1 The search for categorial equivalence
If the target language does not have obvious equivalents to grammatical categories in the outset language a search for such equivalents is triggered. An instance of this is provided by the habitual aspect of Irish. This has no formal parallel in English so that speakers during language shift would not have found a ready equivalent to it.

(1) Bíonn sí ag déanamh imní faoi na leanáí.
lit. ‘is-HABITUAL she at doing worry about the children’
‘She does be worrying about the children.’ (vernacular Irish English)

Here the category “habitual aspect” was transferred from Irish. The exponence derives, however, from the co-option of English do to express this category. Do is suitable for the expression of habituality as it denotes the carrying out of an action. A construction like “X does be Y-ing” had a high probability of diffusion and acceptance in the community of new English speakers that arose in Ireland in the early modern period. The language shift took place in a nonprescriptive environment, one in which structural creativity was not restricted by notions of correctness (Hickey 2007: chapter 4).

2.5.2 Continuation of shift features
Whether features of a shift variety become established in the target language depends on factors such as the numerical and social relationship between shift variety and inherited variety speakers. Another important issue is whether speakers of the shift variety intermingle intensely with the inherited variety speakers (e.g. by cohabitation and intermarriage).

During and shortly after the Scandinavian period, many Viking settlers will have shifted to English and transferred features of their outset language Old Norse while doing so. Of these features some became established in northern English, later spreading southwards (Lutz, 39). How features of a shift variety become characteristic of an entire speech community depends on social factors but also on linguistic ones such as the structural match between outset and target language, the relative transparency of shift features for speakers of the inherited variety, the match of features on more than one language level (e.g. syntax and prosody), and the ease of integration of shift features into the inherited variety (Hickey 2007: chapter 4).

2.6 Language maintenance situations
Where there is contact but no community-wide shift to another language, one can speak of language maintenance (Winford 2003: 61–100). This type of scenario generally involves bilateral influence. However, in historical cases this influence is not necessarily attested to an equal degree on both sides. For instance, the French-English contact, in its early phase after the Norman Conquest, most likely led to an influence of English on French spoken in England, but this is not documented to
the same degree as is the influence in the opposite direction. Furthermore, language maintenance situations are usually characterized by a status cline between the communities in contact. This results in more transfer in one direction than the other.

Language maintenance may also be a temporary situation that ends in shift. For instance, those speakers of Norman French who remained in England ultimately shifted to English. This process can be linguistically interesting if the shifters have considerably more social status than the majority population they are in contact with. In such a situation they can “impose” features of their shift variety on the majority leading later to these traits becoming characteristic of the language being shifted to.

3. Issues in contact studies

3.1 Contact and varieties of English

In English studies the significance of contact in the rise of nonstandard vernaculars was given increasing recognition during the 1980s. Rickford (1986) is a well-known example of work in this vein, here with specific reference to dialect transportation and contact at overseas locations. However, not all scholars saw contact as a prime source of new features in varieties. Some put more emphasis on the continuation of vernacular traits at new locations. This stance forms the so-called “retentionist hypothesis”, which enjoyed greatest favor among Anglicists; a key article for this view is Harris (1984). However, by the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, the considered case for contact in certain scenarios regained acceptance and was underlined by key publications such as Mesthrie (1992) on South African Indian English. The dichotomy of contact versus retention continued to occupy scholars into the 2000s (Filppula 2003). The role of contact in the formation of different varieties of English at various geographical locations has been considered, for example, Bao (2005), which examines substratist influence on the aspectual system of English in Singapore.

Trudgill (1986) is the main study of the mutual influence of dialects on each other’s development, while Samuels (1972) was a precursor that dealt with historical cases. Because of the greater structural similarity between varieties of a language, features can be transferred more easily during contact of comparable duration than between languages that are typologically dissimilar. The specific combinations of input dialects that led to emergent varieties overseas is the subject of New Dialect Formation (Hickey 2003).

3.2 Vernacular universals and contact

The notion of vernacular universals is something that has been dealt with by Anglicists in recent years, above all by J. K. Chambers (see Chambers 2004). It
refers to features found across varieties of English in different parts of the world and postulates that their occurrence is due to universals of language development. The issue has spawned a number of publications, the most comprehensive of which is the volume by Filppula, Klemola, and Paulasto (2009) in which vernacular universals are viewed within the framework of language contact (see the introduction to that volume and also the contribution by Winford, 47). The more specific term “Angloversals”, again to refer to features that tend to recur in vernacular varieties of English, is also found in the literature (Szmrecsanyi and Kortmann 2009; and in this volume, A. Schneider, 53).

3.3 Sociolinguistic perspectives on language contact

An emphasis on the social setting in which language contact can take place is found in many publications and in particular in studies of pidgins and creoles (Deumert and Durrleman 2006). Studies like Siegel (1987), where the plantation environment of the Fiji Islands in the nineteenth century is investigated, implicitly adopt this stance. In handbooks on sociolinguistics and models of socially determined language change, chapters on contact can also be found (e.g. Sankoff 2002).

3.4 Contact in urban environments

Contact studies hitherto have not, as a rule, dealt with the rural/urban dichotomy, probably because at the time at which the contact is assumed to have taken place this division was not relevant for the communities in question. However, contemporary investigations of contact, either interlinguistic or intralinguistic, are frequently of urban scenarios, for example, Silva-Corvalán’s (1996) study of Spanish and English in Los Angeles or Hickey’s (2005) study of language variation and change in Dublin, where dissociation, triggered by internal contact between differing varieties in the city, has been the driving factor. Other urban environments have provided further examples of change and development through contact, for example, the creative language mixture found in the Sheng and Engsh codes in urban Kenya (Abdulaziz and Osinde 1997). For more information on this topic, with reference to North America, see Boberg (42).

3.5 Contact and “New Englishes”

The label “New Englishes” refers to second-language varieties of English that have arisen during the twentieth century in African and Asian countries in which English was transmitted through the educational system and not via settler English (Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008). In such situations contact with the background languages of speakers is a major factor in shaping the “New English” in question. Areal features may also play a role here, that is, features found across several background languages may appear in English spoken across an entire region. South-East Asia
is just such a case. Here the analytic nature of the region’s languages means that English morphology is not adhered to as in settler Englishes. Furthermore, the divergent phonotactics of South-East Asian languages, which do not show consonant clusters in word-final positions and which usually have lexical tone distinctions, renders “New Englishes” quite nonstandard in their sound systems (Lim and Ansaldo, 44).

3.6 Language ecology

Since the term was introduced to language studies by Einar Haugen (1972), “ecology” has become an increasingly important factor, particularly for those scholars working in languages in which contact has played a central role (Mufwene 2008). In invoking ecology to explain language evolution, Mufwene (2001: 153–54) stresses the importance of the social environment for language development—one of his main examples is of the shift from African languages to forms of English by the early generations of black slaves in America. He emphasizes the significance of the initial conditions for this situation along with such factors as population size, habitat, and the socioeconomic setting of early colonial America. These factors determined that African languages were lost and English became dominant.

3.7 Language contact and grammaticalization

The study of grammaticalization received significant impulses from the research of Elizabeth Traugott, Bernd Heine, and Paul Hopper in a number of landmark publications, such as Traugott and Heine (2001), as well as the textbook Hopper and Traugott (2003). In recent years the relationship between grammaticalization and language contact has been the focus of research for some scholars who see the co-option of grammatical material from a donor language in a receiving language as a central phenomenon in contact (Heine and Kuteva 2005).

4. Conclusion

Along with new sets of data, both computer corpora and printed material, there are new scenarios for the development of English, especially outside the traditional countries with settler English. New approaches to the history and development of English have arisen and these are reflected in the current volume. In the research arena of the twenty-first century, a reassessed and revalorized approach to language contact will also have its rightful place.

It is salutary to remind oneself that there is no proof in language contact, it is ultimately about convincing colleagues that one’s interpretation of change is plausible (van der Auwera and Genee 2002). Overstating the case for contact produces
the opposite effect among the unconvinced, quite apart from being unlikely in the actual language situation under investigation, given that several factors are always at work. Nonetheless, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the contact arguments put forward in recent literature and future research will of necessity have to concern itself with data and analyses that are open to diverse reasons for the attested cases of language change in the history of English.

References


Assessing the Role of Contact in the History of English


