

13 Study Guide

Language Contact and Areal Linguistics

Terminology

You should be able to simply define or explain the following terms and concepts.

language contact
borrowing
calques
bilingualism
multilingualism
pidgin
creole
interference

linguistic area
diffusion
superstrate
substrate
lexifier
endangerment
target language
structural isomorphism

Concepts

- When speakers come into contact with each other, their languages also come into contact and this can affect neither, one, both or all of their respective languages.
- Language contact is one source of similarity between languages, whereas genetic relationship is another (as in Chapter 12).
- The attitudes of the speech community(ies) ultimately shape the impact that contact has on each of the languages involved.
- Borrowing can be in the form of lexical items or grammatical items.
- All parts of grammar can be borrowed.
- Borrowed words and forms are not always borrowed intact; the borrowing language may change the pronunciation or semantic meaning as well.
- Borrowing can be motivated by the relationship of speech communities to each other, especially by prestige.
- Bilingualism/multilingualism can be individual or societal.
- Communities can slowly over time begin to speak a language other than their original one for many reasons; this is called language shift and can lead to obsolescence and even language death.
- Pidgins are mixed languages without native speakers; creoles, however, have native speakers.
- Borrowing and structural similarities can be shared by many languages of a geographic region, whether they are related or not.

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Skills

On completion of this chapter, you should be able to perform the following tasks:

- Explain the difference between words that are cognates and words that are borrowed
- Define the term “language family” and name several known families
- Say what the Comparative Method is and what it is used for
- Apply the Comparative Method to a data set, reconstructing proto-forms and stating sound changes
- Identify different types of sound change
- Given data, write a rule describing a sound change
- State the position of English in the Indo-European language family
- State some of the sound changes that occurred in the history of English
- Describe the Great Vowel Shift in English and its impact on spelling and pronunciation of English words
- Identify different types of semantic change
- Explain in general terms where grammatical markers come from
- Name and describe processes involved in grammaticalization
- Discuss linguistic paleontology and the sorts of information that you can learn by reconstructing proto-languages