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.
Study Guide: Language Contact and Areal Linguistics

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