

A structure-based analysis of morphosyntactic regularities in language-contact

The outcome of language-contact, it is claimed (Kaufman & Thomason 1988 and subsequent work), can vary wildly, depending on the social factors involved. Kaufman & Thomason, moreover, show that structural theories attempting to predict such outcomes invariably meet with counterexamples. Nevertheless, I want to claim that there are *linguistic* regularities in language-contact (interacting with social factors, of course) in an attempt to further the research program advanced by e.g. Bickerton (1981) for creole languages and Van Coetsem (1988) for West Germanic. Following Van Coetsem, I adopt the idea that the syntax and inflectional morphology of the mother tongue are imposed on an inadequately learned second language. However, I will also show that inclusion relations between rivalling suffixes and their associated structures, such as naturally exist between closely related languages, may overrule the tendency for the syntax and inflectional morphology of the mother tongue to win out when a second language is inadequately learned.

In order to do so, I will conduct an in-depth comparison of various Frisian-Dutch and Frisian-Saxon based dialects. More specifically, I will first investigate the syntactic distribution of the two types of infinitives in Frisian (-E and -EN) and then go on to show that the two types of infinitives, with their complex syntactic distribution, survived in all the Dutch-based contact-dialects (Town Frisian, Bildts and West-Frisian) but not in the Saxon-based contact dialect of Groningen. Why should this have been so?

I will propose, as is natural in a minimalist framework of grammar, that infinitival endings are checked under head-movement. Under language contact, the optimal situation, clearly, is that a suffix is able to satisfy the checking requirements of both contact languages. This was essentially the case in the Frisian-Dutch language contact where both -E and -EN could pass off as either Frisian or Dutch. For Dutch, free variation can be assumed, whereas for Frisian the choice between -E and -EN is syntactically determined. Frisian mother language speakers could thus impose syntactic substrate onto the two suffixes which could phonologically pass off as Dutch. As for the language contact with Saxon (Low German), here the uniformly present Saxon -EN made it impossible for the Frisian -E to survive, since the Saxon ending contained the Frisian endings but not vice versa. Thus, the phonomorphosyntactic opposition in Frisian (-E versus -EN with complimentary structural distribution) got lost in the contact with Saxon.

As is known from second language acquisition, lexical matters are easily learned, if these are fairly frequent. The prefix GE- is fairly frequent. If the past participle prefix GE- is treated as a lexical matter (the participial suffix being the inflectional part), then we would predict that GE- (Dutch has GE-, Frisian does not have a prefix) would survive into the contact dialects, which it didn't. If the past participle GE- is treated as an inflectional prefix, however, the lack of participial GE- in the contact dialects follows from the proposed imposition of syntax and inflectional morphology upon the second language. Note that there is no inclusion relation between GE- and the absence of a prefix (contrary to the state of affairs in the realm of infinitives). Thus the proposed account correctly explains not only what happened to the Frisian system of infinitival endings in language contact but also what happened to the Dutch participial prefix.

A third phenomenon completely disappeared from the contact dialects while being present in Frisian: the class of verbs ending in -JE. I will argue that the suffix -JE is a lexical matter, as its presence or absence is not dependent on the structural context. It is then correctly predicted that the contact dialects all drop -JE.

I will go on to show how the proposed account can also explain the survival of some Verb-First constructions in the dialects (which are not in Dutch), as well as the resistance of

several Dutch dialects against the Infinitivus-pro-Participio effect of Standard Dutch, provided we adopt Kayne's (1994) hypothesis that all overt movement is leftward movement.

References

- Bickerton, D. (1981) *Roots of Language*. Karoma.
- Coetsem, F. van (1988) *Loan phonology and the two transfer types in language contact*. Foris.
- Kayne, R. (1994) *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*. MIT Press.
- Thomason, S. & T. Kaufman (1988) *Language contact, creolization and genetic linguistics*. U. of California Press.