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Language contact and change in Mesoamerica and beyond (hereafter LCCMB) presents selected contributions from the 2013 workshop on ‘Amerindian Languages in Contact Situations: Spanish-American Perspectives’, held at the International Conference on Historical Linguistics, and from the special session on ‘Language Contact in Mesoamerica’ at the meeting of the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas, also in 2013. The book addresses the relative lack of publications focusing on language contact in an area of extreme linguistic diversity. It does not aim for completeness but offers detailed examples of contact situations in Mesoamerica and nearby areas, highlighting the effect of different types of language contact on language change.

LCCMB presents a range of hypotheses, research methods, and linguistic patterns that will be useful to others researching language change and language contact. The papers that were selected represent distinct academic traditions that do not usually interact—for example, Spanish dialectology, Amerindian linguistics, and sociolinguistics. As a result, the volume provides a more integrated look at language contact and change, which includes the influence of Indigenous languages on Spanish, the influence of Spanish on Indigenous languages, and the influence of Indigenous languages on each other. The data used to support claims of language contact and resulting language change include colonial-era documents that supply examples of older features of currently spoken languages, descriptions of languages that are no longer spoken, and descriptions of currently spoken languages for which there is no earlier documentation. The uneven availability of data for each language makes it necessary to implement unique research strategies to support claims about language contact.

Several chapters use loanwords from Spanish into Indigenous languages to identify the Spanish varieties that served as the source languages for the loans and to establish the time frame of contact. Borrowing can take place over long periods of time in a complex and layered exchange, resulting in distinctive patterns of language change. The research presented here takes into account the sociolinguistic and historical factors that influence particular types of language contact and change.

In their introductory chapter, ‘Language contact in Mesoamerica and beyond’, two of the editors, Karen Dakin and Natalie Offerstein, place the volume in historical and theoretical context with respect to the role language contact plays in language change. The volume is dedicated to Claudia Parodi, the third editor, and honors her passion and enthusiasm for the project even...
when in failing health. Her research and influence are clearly visible throughout the book. The introduction is followed by seventeen chapters that focus on specific language-contact situations in Mesoamerica and beyond. The non-Mesoamerican languages include Apache, Garifuna, Mochica, and Hito-Choilón, and languages of the Orinoco basin.

The first four chapters examine the influence of Spanish on Indigenous languages in Mesoamerica. In Ch. 2, James K. Watters explores the influence of Spanish on Tlachichilco Tepehua and Pisaflures Tepehua. He describes structure-preserving effects, such as the borrowing of infinitives from Spanish which are then inflected with Tepehua morphology; structure-changing effects, such as the change from a three-vowel system to a five-vowel system, triggered in part by the Spanish vowel inventory; and structure-prefering effects, such as the preference in Tlachichilco Tepehua for the periphrastic progressive (similar to the Spanish progressive) over the suffixed form of the progressive that is preferred in Pisaflures Tepehua.

Ch. 3, by Rosemary G. Beam de Azcona, describes how Spanish infinitives are borrowed into Coatec, Miahuatec, and Cisyautepecan Zapotec as nouns in light verb constructions (‘do’, ‘make’, ‘become’, etc.). The borrowed infinitives fit into the NP object slot in these constructions. This is consistent with a general crosslinguistic preference for borrowing nonfinite rather than finite forms, and either using inflection from the matrix language or inserting the nonfinite form into a light verb construction (Myers-Scotton & Jake 2013). In Zapotec, elements borrowed as nouns add meaning without affecting the morphosyntax, making them relatively easy to incorporate.

In Ch. 4, Stephen A. Marlett proposes that how sounds are perceived in Me’phaa (Tlapanec) may be influenced by external factors. The external factors he discusses include contact with Spanish, education in Spanish, contact with other related varieties, contact with other Indigenous languages, and the orthographic practices of other nearby Indigenous communities.

Natalie Operstein, in Ch. 5, highlights the fact that the way a loanword is integrated into the language is not only phonologically motivated, but also affected by sociolinguistic factors, such as the community’s competence in the donor language and the community attitude toward the use of loanwords. She describes how loanwords can be assimilated either into a majority prosodic pattern of the recipient language or into a minority pattern in order to highlight their foreignness. For example, older Spanish loanwords are completely adapted to Zaniza Zapotec phonology except that they are assigned the low tone. The low tone is limited to a small number of Zaniza Zapotec morphemes and therefore can be viewed as a more marked tone. In newer Spanish loans, the default high tone is assigned to the stressed syllable. The use of high tone with newer loans correlates with phonological factors and the community’s level of bilingualism.

The influence of Indigenous languages on Spanish is discussed by Sergio Ibañez Cerda, Israel Martinez Corripio, and Armando Mora-Bustos in Ch. 6. They identify grammatical features that are L1 transfers from South Lacandón and Mazahua to the Spanish L2 of native speakers of these languages. These local transfers are based on specific features of South Lacandón and Mazahua but are sometimes also shared with native speakers of other Indigenous languages, such as Nahuatl, Yucatec Maya, or Otomi. The features examined include the lack of number marking in noun phrases, lack of articles in noun phrases, and the use of the Spanish preposition a with animate objects. In the Spanish of South Lacandón bilinguals, the use of two determiners in a noun phrase is also found.

Claudia Parodi, in Ch. 7, and Natalie Operstein, in Ch. 8, examine Spanish borrowings into Indigenous languages for evidence that different regional varieties of Spanish were spoken in Mesoamerica at the time of the conquest. Parodi proposes that Andalusian, Old Castilian, and Latin American koines are reflected in the loanwords in Indigenous languages and posits these languages as the basis for Latin American Spanish. This view conflicts with the Andalucista theory that Andalusian Spanish is the basis for all varieties of Latin American Spanish. The loans indicate that the main dialects of sixteenth-century Spanish were spoken in the Americas and that the contact between distinct Spanish dialects formed new koines. In analyzing the pronunciation of loans into Zaniza Zapotec, Operstein supports this hypothesis with evidence from early contact (1550 to early 1600s). For example, the relative lack of loans that make use of seseo and yeismo indicate that the main source dialect for Zaniza Zapotec was Old Castilian rather than Andalusian.
The loans allow us to recover the original Spanish phonetic forms, before the Latin American phonemic system evolved.

Mercedes Montes de Oca Vega, in Ch. 9, describes the use of Spanish in Nahuatl couplets as a deliberate discourse strategy of the colonial period that occurred primarily in Nahuatl texts written for evangelization. She analyzes the inflection used on the loans, the resemanticization, and the pairing of Nahuatl and Spanish words. Couplets were traditionally used in Nahuatl for specific genres, particularly in ritual, religious, and institutional texts. Using the Nahuatl stylistic features in religious texts assigns the texts greater status.

In Ch. 10, Lucero Meléndez Guarrama finds evidence of Spanish/Huastec language contact in a sixteenth-century text by Friar Juan de la Cruz (1571). Spanish borrowings are particularly used to express new Catholic religious concepts, for example, faith, baptism, communion, priest, devil, hell, and so forth. The loans are all nouns and are spelled in Spanish but integrated morphologically and syntactically into Huastec. Other concepts are expressed by creating new terms or descriptive neologisms, or are translated one-to-one.

Yolanda Lastra describes the types of Spanish loans that were borrowed into Chichimeco Jonaz in Ch. 11. Lastra focuses her analysis primarily on her own data, collected from 1958–2012, which includes conversations and narratives by speakers of all ages. She found that nouns, verbs, and prepositions are most borrowed, and that the proportion of loans in the texts varied from 1–10%. However, there were fewer loans in everyday conversations and narratives.

In Ch. 12, Risa G. Yáñez Rosales identifies phonological and morphological interference from Guachichil (Chichimec) and Cora (Uto-Aztecan) on seventeenth-century Nahuatl texts written by L2 speakers of Nahuatl. The texts were produced in Los Altos, which probably had Guachichil speakers, and the Sierra Madre Occidental, which had Cora speakers. Nahuatl varieties from both central and western Mexico are used in the texts, which complicates the task of identifying interference.

Karen Dakin, in Ch. 13, untangles the migratory chronology of the Nahu by examining how and when linguistic features spread to individual varieties of Nahu. She traces contact between Western Nahuas and Eastern Nahuas by analyzing six features shared by Central Nahu and Western Nahu languages. Dakin focuses on contact in western Mexico, specifically on how Cora and Huichol may have triggered changes in Nahuatl. The Western Nahu varieties incorporate features that resulted from contact with Cora and Huichol and that are not shared by Eastern Nahu speakers, who were the first to move out of the western area. She highlights the importance of later Western Nahu migrations into the central area of Mexico, which tentatively provide evidence in favor of the proposal of Central Nahu as a ‘PostClassic koine’.

The next four chapters look at language contact outside the boundaries of Mesoamerica. In Ch. 14, Willem J. de Reuse documents the influence on the Apachean languages from Kiowa-Tanoan, Uto-Aztecan (Hopi), Zuni, and Comanche. Borrowings into Apache include lexical items, such Kiowa-Tanoan words for ‘salt’ and ‘deer’, and morphology, such as Zuni yes/no-question marking. De Reuse encounters examples of avoidance patterns triggering some cases of borrowing. For example, the Comanche word for ‘coffee’ was borrowed into Plains Apache because the Apache word was the name of a chief who had recently died. As a result, the Apache word was taboo, and the Comanche word was adopted.

Rita Eloranta, in Ch. 15, provides evidence of contact between three extinct Andean languages that belonged to two genetically unrelated language groups: Mochica on the north coast of Peru, and Cholón and Hibito (Hibito-Cholón) on the northeastern slopes of the Andes. The hypothesis of contact is supported by shared culturally important lexical items and similar numeral classifier systems (not found in languages near Mochica).

In Ch. 16, Pamela Munro makes the case for adding Garifuna (Arawakan) to the Mesoamerican linguistic area defined by Campbell, Kaufman, and Smith Stark (1986). She proposes that Garifuna exhibits enough of the typologically Mesoamerican features to be considered part of the linguistic area. She also suggests that several new syntactic features be added to the list of linguistic traits typical of Mesoamerican languages that were not recognized as such in Campbell et al. 1986.
In describing the approach to language change expressed by the Jesuit missionary Filippo Salvatore Gilij (1721–1789) in Ch. 17, Matthias Pache, Arjan Mossel, and Willem F. H. Adelaar remark on the very modern notions he proposed while documenting Indigenous languages of the Orinoco region. Many of his ideas, such as the role of language contact in language change, are also found in modern linguistic views of language change. He discussed loanwords, Indigenous language borrowings into Spanish, language extinction, word-order patterns, sound change, and sound correspondences, and he identified several language families. He further described dialect differences as well as the influence of age, genre, and profession on language variation.

Marta Luján applies Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogical principle in characterizing the development of Latin American Spanish and language contact in the Americas. In viewing language as interactive, creative, and contextualized, she demonstrates how speakers participated in developing meaning in their language through their interactions. She distinguishes between intra-group dialogic contact among the Spanish, which produced the first bicultural terms, and extra-group contact with native peoples, which resulted in loans that were adopted into Latin American Spanish.

Although it is not comprehensive, LCCMB contains high-quality articles of interest to Mesoamericanists, historical linguists, sociolinguists, and any scholar interested in language-contact effects. The chapters include detailed descriptions of linguistic phenomena that reveal the complexity, layering, and interwoven nature of language contact.

REFERENCES


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Investigating the neural mechanisms of cognition is never an easy task, but it is particularly difficult in the case of language. This is because, surprisingly, there is no general consensus even on what language is. Imagine if, in the neuroscience of memory, there were not general agreement on what memory actually is, or even whether it exists at all. Luckily, that is not the case. Nevertheless, even after more than a century of research, there are major disagreements about the neural representation of memory, at both the brain and the cellular level. In the case of language, prospects are even bleaker. But an investigation can be done, as Angela Friederici demonstrates in Language in our brain, in which she reviews the impressive research that she and her collaborators have conducted—and indeed continue to be involved in—in this complex field of inquiry. This is clearly a very exciting and dynamic paradigm, with many of the findings discussed in this book having been published very recently.