Social and communicative approaches to mixed languages

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Yaron Matras' paper is a significant contribution to the study of mixed languages. Its innovative points are the attempt to compartmentalise the process of their genesis into a number of separate components, and its function-based orientation embedded in a communicative orientation. However, I do not think that this compartmentalisation explains more than earlier theories.

The paper's abstract style and the small selection of sample languages and sentences, coupled with somewhat idiosyncratic terminology which is not always followed throughout the paper, hide some of its inconsistencies and weaknesses.

I will first discuss some general problems with Matras' four processes. Then I sketch an alternative approach. After that I discuss serious problems in applying the compartmentalisation to one of the cases, Michif. In an additional case study, I show better (but admittedly less elaborate) predictive power for the intertwining model.

When Matras mentions descriptivists and structuralists, I should probably include myself among those. Matras' source of inspiration is his recourse to a communicative theory of the genesis of mixed languages. The ideas that I have supported or developed are theories of genesis as well, albeit that the explanatory motives given by me were social rather than communicative. The communicative approach cannot replace the social approach, at most it can complement it.

Of the four processes invoked by Matras two affect the lexicon almost exclusively: lexical reorientation and selective replication. These two processes affect languages in different ways, but the results can be superficially similar: a dichotomy of content words and grammatical system. In both cases the innovations with regard to the source languages are often overwhelming. There are clear communicative motives for their emergence, based on the functions of the new languages (identity marker versus secrecy). They explain many differences (including some structural ones) between languages which have been called "mixed". The concepts build on earlier studies, using new terminology. I think these are useful concepts for secret languages like Lekoudesch, Yenisch and Manisch.

But does "selective replication" also apply to the other cases discussed as resulting from this process? How "selective" should the vocabulary be? In the three best documented varieties of Para-Romani (Scandinavia, England, Spain) roughly an almost equal number of Romani roots are attested as in regular Romani dialects such as Bugurdži. Boretzky (1998) has calculated that out of 750 inherited Romani words, Kalderash Romani and Bugurdži Romani ("normal" Romani) had preserved 600 and 570 respectively, and the Para-Romani varieties of Spain, England

and Scandinavia 580, 520 and 500 respectively. One can hardly call that "selective".

The other two processes, convergence and fusion, affect mostly grammar and pragmatic elements. In many of the cases these are just additive processes, combined with others. There are indeed cases of across-the-board convergence (some discussed in Bakker 1996, 2000a) yielding mixed languages, but I do not think this is the case for Petjo or Javindo. The presence of passive morphology in Petjo can easily be explained in the intertwining model, since it is one of the few morphological operations in the source variety of Malay, and syntactically it behaves as expected (see below).

The term "fusion" relates to a process which does not affect languages so radically, but still visibly. Discourse markers and conjunctions tend to be in the pragmatically dominant language, either temporarily or permanently, through fusion. Fusion therefore mostly involves discourse markers, interjections and word order. It is the most problematic of all. Even though it is said to concern mostly discourse markers, it is not understandable why it should be the "extreme" (main?) mechanism at work in Copper Island Aleut, with its intricate mixture on many levels. Also, in Michif, fusion departs from Matras' definition.

Despite Matras' argumentation, I would still maintain that all of the languages discussed here, except two, show a basic dichotomy of grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax) versus lexicon. We find variation almost exclusively in the free grammatical morphemes. The intertwining model is associated with new ethnic groups that are (often) the result of massive marriages of men from one group and women from another, and also with certain languages such as Para-Romani (but not necessarily secret languages such as Yenisch, Manisch and Lekoudesch). There are two structural exceptions to this pattern: Michif and Copper Island Aleut. I have given typological arguments for the deviant nature of Michif (Bakker, 1997), but I have no solution for Copper Island Aleut – but neither has anyone else, including Matras.

The intertwining model has been sketched in Bakker (1997, Chapter 7) and is elaborated in Bakker (2000b), where a much broader database is investigated of more than two dozen languages. Sociohistorical, diachronic and psycho-linguistic arguments are presented there, which I cannot repeat here. I see no reason to revise my view that what I call intertwined languages (which does not include all mixed languages) constitute a single type – albeit with some variation, of course. It is in the free grammatical morphemes (pronouns, copulas, demonstratives, negative markers, etc.), and only there, that we find both intralinguistic and interlinguistic variation, as also alluded to in Matras' paper.

The assignment of a separate communicative function to negation and existential verbs, just because these appear to behave unexpectedly in some languages, is not justifiable. In most intertwined languages there is variation in the source language of negators and copulas, as predicted. Furthermore, equation of existential verbs with copulas, hinted at here and there in the text, does not appear to fit the data: in Matras' Lekoudesch and Angloromani data the locative function (cross-linguistically closely related to existential) is expressed in the respective lexifier languages (Hebrew, Romani), whereas the equative and identificational functions are from the respective grammaticiser languages (German, English). This is in line with other cases of mixed languages (e.g. Michif), and should be interpreted as a warning against categorial generalisations such as "copula". On the other hand, it confirms Matras' statement that the most lexical or deictic category of a set of meanings (here those expressed like copulas), will be the one from the lexicon language.

I would like to take issue with the communicative approach by focussing on the language I know best: Michif. Matras' hypothesis of its genesis is based on an assumption of the short-lived influence of French, referring to my work. Both the reference and the claim are incorrect. It is actually much easier to find French speakers among the Michif speakers than it is to find Cree speakers. Of the many dozens of Michif speakers I have worked with in Canada and the United States, only one could speak Cree, and perhaps one in three could speak French. Hence, French has lasted longer than Cree, and Matras' explanation for the compartmentalisation is based on a wrong assumption and is therefore invalid.

Matras believes that Michif is a case in which three of his four processes are combined: it was a case of lexical reorientation – apparently of Cree towards French – combined with "fusion of the noun phrase grammar" and convergence (unspecified where). Lexical reorientation is supposed to be the transfer of meaning, i.e. content elements, for the purpose of shifting meaning to a different and culture-specific system. This is impossible to reconcile with the facts of Michif. Lots of concepts relating to Cree culture can only be expressed in French (e.g. *tipi*, local food resources, plants and animals, sun dance, bow and arrow, *kinnikinnik*, etc.), whereas other, typically European, concepts can only be expressed in Cree (e.g. to shoot with a gun, to sell, to drive a car, to plough, to arrest). Furthermore, there would be no conceivable communicative reason to limit such a communication-based process process to nouns – Matras invokes the often observed fact that nouns are more prone to borrowing than adjectives and verbs, but this is irrelevant: what has happened here has nothing to do with lexical borrowing in "normal" situations of contact.

When Matras refers to fusion of noun phrase grammar it is not clear what he means. Perhaps he alludes to the fact that noun phrase word order is purely French (*Métis* French, that is), including the inherited variable order of French adjectives, rather than Cree as should be expected on the basis of his (somewhat inaccurate) item 2) regarding

Michif. He offers no explanation for this. The little Cree influence on the noun phrase predates the genesis of Michif (Bakker 1997).

Further, the source languages of coordinating conjunctions contradict a scenario in which French elements replace Cree ones: "but" is never from French (but rather Cree and indeed English) and "and" is more often from French than from Cree whereas "or" is always from French. Assuming that Cree is the "L1", the "native language" or "inherited", this contradicts Matras' own (1998) universals of borrowing. Here his "fusion" concept does not apply, and reversal of Cree and French as L1 and L2 does not help here (see also below).

Fusion is also invoked as influencing the "continuum from interaction-management to epistemic qualification" in the case of Michif, but here again a concrete example is lacking. It appears that in Michif almost all of the interjections (equivalent to "Wow!", "Ah!", and the like) derive from Cree, only some swear words and interjections ("look!", "Oh my God!") come from French.

If we look at the deictic elements in Michif, it appears that some locative adverbs are from Cree (here, there, gone, far away) and some from both French and Cree (everywhere, outside, inside). Time adverbs are from French (yesterday, last night), from French and Cree (tomorrow, now), or from Cree (long time ago, at the same time, today, soon, by and by). Other types of adverbs show a similar, seemingly arbitrary distribution of French and Cree elements. No communicative motivation plays a role here. Matras' account fails.

If I may summarise Matras' view in Table 1, it is easy to see that it does not work for Michif. Content elements, relating to meaning (a), are about equally derived from the two languages. Communicative category (b), I have argued above, is an arbitrary and ad-hoc category in my view. Communicative goal (c) again shows both Cree and French linguistic elements, and there is no communicative reason for having noun phrases (with zero-inflection?) and NP word order from one language but sentential order and verb inflection from another. Linguistic elements relating to monitoring (d) are Cree rather than French, so the predicted fusion is rather shallow, and the French and Cree conjunctions even contradict Matras. In the final category (e), a communicative approach cannot explain why deictic elements and quantifiers are from both languages, why some anaphora are from Cree and why possessives are mostly from French – Cree nouns have Cree possessive markers. In short, Matras' approach is inconsistent with the Michif facts in all of his categories.

Here Matras falls into the trap of assuming that all languages, including mixed languages, have a "base" into which other items can be introduced (borrowed, or taken over by convergence in the sense of Matras). This is something I would like to take issue with, since I think it is the basis of some unnecessary and factually incorrect claims.

Concerning Michif, for instance, it is impossible to speak of L1 and L2, or a "native" language versus an "intruding" language. These are misleading terms in cases where fluent bilinguals, with social motives, attempt to

Table 1. *Matras' communicative approach*

<i>communicative goal</i>	<i>linguistic means</i>	<i>affected part of language</i>	<i>relevant contact processes</i>
(a) conveyance of meaning	content elements	lexicon	lexical orientation, selective replication
(b) value of proposition	some grammatical elements	negation, locative/existential copulas	lexical reorientation
(c) formulation and processing of proposition	language-internal relations	inflection, word order	convergence, fusion
(d) monitoring and directing	relations between speakers	discourse markers, interjections, focus markers	fusion
(e) convey speech-situation-bound information	communicatively salient elements	deictics, anaphora, possessives, quantifiers, motion verbs	selective replication

create and speak a new language based on the available resources: their mother tongues. It has nothing to do with cultural or communicative motives, nor with a colonial situation.

The communicative approach does not do more than make the simple observation that different processes are at work. It does not predict how these are combined under what circumstances (except for the two lexical processes when they are exclusive processes). The communicative goals do not affect the connected language categories any more or less than the others. A "half-way" explanation makes no sense either.

Does the model fare better with the other languages? I have no space here to discuss those in detail, but I do not think it does. Matras' explanations for the distribution of elements in the other languages often seem ad hoc and post hoc. Furthermore, for all non-secret languages Matras mentions remaining puzzles and problematic elements.

In short, I do not think that the communicative approach is superior to the social, structuralist or intertwining approach. Compartmentalisation is not able to predict more, or more accurately, the mixed languages facts than the social approach. As an example we can take the language of the Peranakan Chinese of Eastern Java, which

has not figured in the recent literature on mixed languages, but which fits the predictions of the intertwining model exactly. The Peranakans descend from Malay-speaking Chinese traders and native Javanese women. The verbal and nominal roots are from Malay/Indonesian (90%), the fathers' language, and the morphology (and presumably word order and phonology) from Javanese (88%), the mothers' language. Function words are distributed equally from the two languages (53% Javanese), and so are the adjectives and adverbs (together 46% Javanese; all percentages from Dreyfuss and Oka, 1979, 251). Nevertheless, this example also shows a weakness of the intertwining approach: there is currently no explanation for the source languages of the individual function words. Probably here Matras' processes and communicative motivations can help in providing an answer.

The compartmentalisation is at the same time a strong and a weak point of the approach. It is strong, because complex processes can be explained. It is weak, because it can explain anything. There is hardly any predictive power in the crucial domains. More seriously, it is not compatible with the facts of the non-secret languages.

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