

28. Hunter-Gatherer Languages in Contact

16367 - Hunter-gatherer Languages in Contact: An Introduction

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Grimm, Nadine, Other / Andere; Hammarström, Harald (Other / Andere)

Languages spoken by hunting and gathering (HG) societies are generally said to be prone to borrow heavily both lexical items and linguistic structures from neighboring non-HG languages. In contrast, linguistic borrowing in the other direction, i.e. from HG to non-HG languages, is basically unheard of. This assumption is often based on social, economic, and demographic factors while a systematic linguistic investigation has not been possible, until recently, due to lack of data. The last decades, however, have seen a wealth of new empirical data on HG languages which enable us to re-evaluate such claims and explore the relation between languages of HGs and non-HGs in a new light.

This talk summarizes the major findings of research on HG languages and their relationship to non-HG languages of the past decades. These findings range from quantitative phylogenetic studies of more than one hundred HG languages, comparing basic vocabulary across languages on different continents (Bower et al. 2011) to studies on specific phenomena in HG languages such as numeral systems (Hammarström 2010, Epps et al. 2012) as well as small-scale case studies on various HG languages around the world, for instance the borrowing of colors in Gyeli, Cameroon (Grimm to appear).

All these studies contribute to a general understanding of language contact phenomena in HG languages. They also provide a basis for investigating historic relations between HGs and their neighbors, prehistoric and present.

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16223 - The mimicry game: motivated variation in Gyele

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Duke, Daniel (Leiden University & SIL Cameroon, Leiden, Netherlands / Niederlande)*

Introduction. Gyele (also called Bakola) is a Bantu A80 language spoken by forest foragers in the South region of Cameroon. It is very closely related to Kwasio (also Bantu A80), which is spoken by one of the neighboring farmer groups. The Gyele speakers (called as a people Bagyele or Bakola) previously had close association primarily with the Kwasio community (Bahuchet 2006). However, over the last 100 years they have entered into close contact with other language communities such as the Basaa, Bulu, Bakoko, and Yassa (Ngima Mawoung 2001). Currently there are multiple varieties or dialects of Gyele, each showing influences from different combinations of neighboring languages. For example, while all varieties have a base shared with Kwasio, the Bakola-Basaa variety has a great deal of phonological and lexical and grammatical influence from Basaa (Ngue Um 2012). In addition to the dialectal variation, there is a great deal of variation which occurs in the speech of any given individual.

Variation. In his phonology sketch, Renaud (1976) noted the presence of two very different dialects of Gyele, with speakers of both varieties often in the same camp. This situation became more clear when the Volkswagen DoBeS language documentation project recorded data from throughout the Gyele area (Ngue Um and Duke 2012). Analysis of transcriptions from the Gyele-Kwasio area have shown variation of many kinds: (1) conversations carried out completely in a neighboring language, (2) code-switching to a neighboring language, (3) code-switching to a different Gyele variety, (4) phonetic variation, or alternate pronunciations of Gyele words to mimic other languages or other varieties, and (5) lexical variation, or choices among multiple lexical or structural options within the speaker's own variety.

Motivation. The Bagyele often use hunting metaphors to discuss their relationships with neighboring farmer communities and other outsiders. Even as they use hunting calls to attract game animals, they speak of mimicking other languages to attract patrons who provide needed goods and services. There are multiple dynamics in the complex interactions with the outside world. There is a desire to identify with other groups, but also there is a desire to differentiate themselves from other groups. These dynamics partially motivate the complex patterns of variation shown in the daily speech of the Gyele speakers.

Conclusions. This paper gives an introduction to the dynamics of variation in Gyele. Much of the variation mimics aspects of other languages or varieties. Other variation choices preserve or accentuate "a difference" between the speaker's variety and other varieties and languages. An understanding of these dynamics may help lead to a better understanding of the unique characteristics of the languages spoken by Central African forest foragers.

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16177 - Language and Ethnic Contacts on Sakhalin in View of Soviet and Japanese Colonial Rule

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Mamontova, Nadezhda (University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland / Finland)

This presentation is devoted to language contact between the ethnic groups of the Island of Sakhalin, especially in its southern part. The most significant feature of the island's historical past was that its population acquired the experience of navigation much earlier than in some other parts of the world. This fact is very important for understanding the specifics of Sakhalin ethnic groups: people were highly mobile and came into frequent contact with the numerous neighboring cultures. Although the ancient population of Sakhalin cannot be directly identified with its modern one, the ability to steer a boat seems to be a significant attribute of the people living on the island from time immemorial and, among other things, this ability preserved the international spirit of Sakhalin and multilingualism. For example, local indigenous minorities were engaged with boat exchange with some ethnic groups living on the mainland. Through this exchange they managed to keep a wide web of social, ethnic and linguistic relations extending far beyond the island's boundaries. Moreover, the interweaving of languages spoken by its population have always been complicated also due to the island's frontier position and geopolitical location in proximity to China, Japan, and Russia. The indigenous peoples interacted with the Manchus, Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese. Most of those contacts took place in the framework of trade relations. This international spirit of Sakhalin preserved at least until the end of the nineteenth century and was significantly violated during the colonial rule of twentieth century Japan and the Soviet Union with its strong assimilation policy towards the minority groups, as well as the numerous redefinitions of state boundaries, high rate of mixed marriages between indigenous people and non-indigenous newcomers, and frequent voluntary and forcible changes of languages, identities and cultural practices. Therefore, first, the presentation is devoted to the language and ethnic contacts on Sakhalin before the most violent period of colonization took place, second, to the sociolinguistic situation on the island from the beginning of the twentieth century until the era of perestroika in the light of Japanese and Soviet nationality and language policies. Which role did indigenous peoples and their languages play in geopolitical dispute between Russia and Japan? Has linguistic assimilation shaped local identities and in which way? Finally, it seeks to show the present-day situation in regard to the relation between language and identity. For example, when there is a choice between three or more identities, which is a quite common phenomenon in Southern Sakhalin, sometimes it becomes difficult to understand their intertwining: why in one situation an individual prefers an indigenous identity, but in another makes a choice in favour of either a Korean, Russian or Japanese one. The same is true of a language choice.

16137 - The role of language contact with Kusunda in the development of the Raute Language

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Fortier, Jana (*University of California, San Diego, san diego, USA*)

The Raute and Kusunda of Nepal represent two hunter-gatherer societies that have lived in close proximity for many years. Kusunda is an isolate language (ISO 639-3 kgg) with few loans from the neighboring language families of Tibeto-Burman, Austroasiatic, and Indo-Aryan. Raute is a Tibeto-Burman language (ISO 639-3 rau) in the central Himalayan language group. The few ethnographic accounts that describe their social relations with each other state that the Raute fear the Kusunda, but unfortunately there is no other information about their cultural contact and no reasons are offered for the reported antagonistic relations. In this paper, I suggest that they have had a more complex (pre-)historical relationship than is currently recorded. To test this idea, I outline the language contact situation for Raute based on language materials which are not Indo-Aryan. I next situate Kusunda within this corpus using recently published language materials of Raute and Kusunda. In my talk, I will present a review of the correlates between the two languages. With a set of 10% lexical correlations (~55 lexical pairs/550 comparable word pairs), Raute and Kusunda word pairs occur in the semantic domains of 1) deixis (spatial, temporal, social, pronominal), 2) negation (grammatical), 3) natural world (color, animal, food), and 4) supernatural realm. The talk concludes with discussion of how these lexical pairs inform us more about the nature of prehistoric cultural contact between speakers of these two ethnolinguistic communities.

16122 - The *Baakaa puzzle: language shift where and when?

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Güldemann, Tom (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany / Deutschland); Winkhart, Benedikt (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany / Deutschland)

In-depth anthropological and ethno-linguistic research has revealed an interesting pattern among what is commonly called the “Western Pygmies”. The core of this domain is formed by the two geographically and demographically most important groups usually known as “Baka” and “(Y)aka”. Distributed across a large area stretching from the southwest of the Central African Republic over the north of Congo Brazzaville and the southeast of Cameroon up to the northeast of Gabon, their mutual border is defined by the north-south course of the Sangha River. The puzzling finding of past research is that while Baka and Yaka are distinct communities, whose languages also belong to quite different families, viz. Baka-Mundu (Ubangi) and Bantu (Benue-Congo), respectively, they share a large and historically diagnostic amount of linguistic and cultural features. Since these shared traits are difficult to explain in terms of contact across the two entire populations, Bahuchet (e.g., 1992, 1993) has hypothesized the previous existence of an ancestor community *Baakaa that can account for the unity observed across the two groups. From a linguistic perspective this plausible hypothesis implies at some stage language shift on the part of at least one if not both communities in order to produce their marked separation today, involving also former populations which are generally thought to be the ultimate source of the two pygmy languages at issue. However, a concrete linguistically coherent scenario has been hard to establish. This is compounded by currently dominant hypotheses on the history of the Baka-Mundu family which assume a large amount of long-distance migration, including the relevant pygmy group (see Bouquiaux and Thomas 1980). Starting out from the assumption that any language shift on the part of pygmies is more likely to have taken place in-situ and based on a more dedicated survey of the linguistic diversity in the area and its historical dynamics, the talk offers a new perspective at the historical problem at hand, thus informing several questions of the workshop “Hunter-Gatherer Languages in Contact”.

15845 - Living at the Fringe - hunter-gatherer traditions of interior Papua-New Guinea (PNG)

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Dosedla, Henry (CINDIS, Stuttgart, Germany / Deutschland)*

In spite of the apparent dominance of horticulturalist and pig breeding societies throughout mainland New Guinea there were still some tribal territories where subsistence was mainly based on hunting, fishing and gathering.

While this applies the most to the lowlands near coastal regions with abundant sago swamps which until recently still provided the main food source there, rather little was known of distinct areas along the fringes of the interior highlands which remained untouched by European contacts until just a few decades ago.

Field research carried out there during the Seventies prior to the crucial years of cultural change in the course of national independence of PNG resulted in intricate insights into the life patterns of the last hunting and gathering groups of the island. Sharing a nomadic life style their interactions with neighbouring highlands tribes were restricted to seasonal visiting parties on the base of a communication idiom known as "karuka" language.

15839 - Paliyan Linguistic Acculturation

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Gardner, Peter (University of Missouri, Columbia, MO, USA)

Paliyans are South Indian hunter-gatherers in hills overlooking the Tamil plain and they speak what is ostensibly a dialect of Tamil. Yet my '62-4 field notes show that Paliyan phonology, vocabulary, and grammar require much rethinking.

First, a sociolinguistic note: Paliyan children learn from casually watching and from their own experience, rather than from deliberate lessons. This leads to significantly different idiolects—with which they are comfortable.

Phonology: Unlike Tamil speakers, Paliyans verge on having free variation between long and short vowels.

Vocabulary: The Paliyan vocabulary is a small subset of Tamil vocabulary, with 2 anomalies:

- a) The Paliyan color term set is small (what evolutionists call a “Stage 1” terminology) and, unlike the Tamils', its terms refer to processes, not hues.
- b) Southern Paliyans, use 3 important species of yam, for one of which they have two names, one having no identifiable Dravidian cognate. Can it be a pre-Tamil word?

Grammar: Instead of using complex Tamil past tense verbs, Paliyans use “completive aspect” to indicate that an action is already finished. This resembles aspect being used elsewhere to get around complex grammar in creole formation. When slaves or indentured laborers are forcibly moved they learn vocabulary relatively easily, but grammar can pose difficult challenges.

Contact: The Paliyans have a different situation from indentured workers, because they have lived beside Tamils for centuries or millennia, conflicts between them have tended to be localized, trade will have softened intergroup relations, and Paliyans have avenues of escape.

Even so, as Tamils frame intergroup relations as dominant vs. submissive and, as Tamil language instruction has been non-existent, Paliyans approach Tamils shyly and they long used “silent trade” to minimize direct contact. I also recorded: a) violence against Paliyans by police officers, b) murder of Paliyans by a honey contractor, and c) intended murder of a Paliyan youth by plantation workers. While Paliyans have not been in a situation nearly as bad as that of Caribbean slaves, violence and discrimination against them are a matter of record. I suggest that Paliyans are little more motivated than Caribbean creole speakers to take the language lessons that would be needed for them to master the intricacies of the dominant peoples' grammar.