Call for Papers

Workshop

Ancient Languages and Cultures in Contact

at the 48. Österreichische Linguistik-Tagung (December 17th-19th) in Innsbruck

As one of the main (external) factors in language change, language contact is a well-established field in linguistic research. Many modern introductions to certain language families or language areas include chapters on language contact. Yet, research on language contact in ancient languages traditionally focuses on the contacts between languages of a single language family.[1]

Therefore, this workshop will deal with language contact situations in ancient worlds, regardless of the boundaries of any language family or branch. Languages unrelated to each other can develop very similar linguistic features on phonetical, morphological, lexical, and syntactical levels through language contact (such as the very famous example of the Balkan *Sprachbund*). For example, in Ancient Studies, much work has been done for the linguistic convergence of Sumerian and Akkadian.[2] Although Sumerian (language isolate) and Akkadian (Semitic) are not related to each other, they show a striking number of similarities on a lexical, structural, and conceptual level.

The workshop focuses on the contact-induced language change as well as the nature of contact situations which trigger these developments regardless of the boundaries of language families. We welcome papers from any branch of linguistics, history and archaeology, contributing to the questions of language contact and convergence areas in the ancient worlds.

Organisation
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[1] For example Weninger (2011) and Hasselbach-Andee (2020) for the Near East.
[2] Especially by Edzard (1977) and further studied by von Soden (1973), Pedersen (1989), Streck (1998) and Edzard (2003).

M. J. Kümmel, Jena

Kontakt und Konvergenz in der Entwicklung vom Alt- zum Mitteliranischen

Während das Altpersische sich typologsich noch kaum vom altindoeuropäischen Typ unterscheidet (also Sprachen wie Sanskrit, Altgriechisch oder Litauisch), zeigen sich die westmitteliranischen Sprachen stark verändert, insbesondere durch Schwund der Endsilben und einen drastischen Abbau der nominalen Flexionsendungen. Im Gegensatz dazu sind Endungen und Flexion in den östlichsten mitteliranischen Sprachen (Sogdisch und Sakisch) besser bewahrt. Von Kümmel (2013) wurden diese unterschiedlichen Entwicklungen zusammen mit Divergenzen in der allgemeinen phonologischen Entwicklung auch durch unterschiedliche Kontaktsituationen erklärt, nämlich stärkeren Kontakt mit typologisch stärker abweichenden Sprachen im Westen. Auch spezifischere kontaktbedingte Entwicklungen sind postuliert worden.: So hat Yakubovich (2020) die typologisch ungewöhnliche Entwicklung von rechtsverzweigender Syntax in der Nominalphrase im Kontrast zu linksverzweigender Satzsyntax im Persischen durch Einfluss des Elamischen erklärt. Die westlichen iranischen Sprachen sind innerhalb des Iranischen Randsprachen, und starker Kontakt ist vor allem durch zahlreiche Entlehnungen aus dem Iranischen nachgewiesen (vgl. Kümmel 2022 mit Literatur). Einfluss dieser Kontakte auf die Entwicklung der westiranischen Sprachen selbst ist insgesamt noch weniger genau untersucht worden, sei es auf lexikalischem oder grammatischem Gebiet. Im Vortrag sollen vor allem mögliche strukturelle Einflüsse von Kontaktsprachen auf die Entwicklung vom Alt- zum Mitteliranischen untersucht werden, also phonologische und morphosyntaktische Interferenzen und deren Abgrenzung von internen Entwicklungen.

Literatur

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The Mesopotamian Language Area

Alexander Steiner (Innsbruck)

In Ancient Near Eastern Studies, much work has been done for the linguistic convergence of Sumerian and Akkadian. Although Sumerian (language isolate) and Akkadian (Semitic) are not related to each other, they show a striking number of similarities on every level of the linguistic system and on the conceptual level. So far, apart from a chapter in D. O. Edzards Sumerian Grammar from 2003, the nature of the (ancient) Mesopotamian language area has not yet been described as such but scholars dealing with the areal phenomena in Mesopotamia focused on language contact of Sumerian and/or Akkadian with other languages of the ancient near east for example Sumerian and Akkadian (Edzard 1977, 2003; Pedersen 1989; Streck 1998, Crisostomo 2020), Akkadian and Hittite (Von Soden 1973), Akkadian and Hurrian (Wilhelm 1970; Streck 1998), and Akkadian and Aramaic (Beaulieu 2013).

In this paper, I will attempt to outline the Mesopotamian language area as such throughout the languages history, focusing on the most striking areal features.

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Languages and Cultures of the Eastern Silk Road in Contact

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From the 2nd century CE on, larger communities and monasteries developed along the trade routes of the ancient Silk Road in and around the Tarim Basin in today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in the People's Republic of China. These are the first known centres of writing, copying, translating, and transmitting texts in this region.

The old Indo-European languages Sanskrit, Tocharian, and Saka written in a Central Asian variant of the Indian Brahmi script – Tarim Brahmi – were the major languages in use in the Tarim Basin in the first millennium CE. How and why they ended up there is an ongoing debate.

The study of language contact between ancient Indo-European languages and other languages of this area, especially Indic and Chinese, is still in its infancy. Work dedicated to this issue – with very few exceptions – tends to be methodologically flawed in various aspects: it suffers from a lack of understanding of the language ecology of this area; it tends to ignore the philological background of the loan relation; it usually neglects historical and cultural constraints on contact situations.

The recent advances in Indo-European linguistics and philology, especially regarding the languages of the ancient Eastern Silk Road and the progress made in the study of non-Indo-European languages of the region are the basis for a new look on language contacts in the premodern Tarim Basin.

In this presentation, the language ecology of the Eastern Silk Road will be (re)examined. This will shed new light on cultural contacts on ancient China's western frontiers and on the linguistic reconstruction of the involved languages.

Ivo Hajnal | Katharina Zipser (Universität Innsbruck):

Wie 'mündlich' ist mündliche Dichtung – der Fall von Homers Ilias

Die epische Dichtung Homers gilt als klassisches Beispiel mündlicher Dichtung. Allerdings ist der Begriff der 'mündlichen Dichtung' literaturgeschichtlich mehrdeutig. Er umfasst den mündlichen Vortrag memorierter Verse ebenso wie die Stegreifproduktion während des mündlichen Vortrags, die sich einzig an vorgegebene thematische Strukturen bzw. Stoffe hält. Im letztgenannten Fall der direkten oralen Produktion – der Mündlichkeit im engeren Sinne – muss der Dichter zwangsläufig die Vorgaben einhalten, die für natürliche Sprachproduktion gelten. Aus diskurspragmatischer Sicht sind dies etwa die Gliederung des Vortrags in übersichtliche Sinneinheiten und 'Intonational units' – was für homerische Dichtung gemäss der aktuellen Forschungslage zutrifft. Wie der Vortrag zeigt, lässt sich aus syntaktischer Sicht eine weitere Anforderung ergänzen: Der dichterische Vortrag muss sich im Falle der Stegreifproduktion auf alle Fälle an die Phasengrenzen halten, die gemäss generativer Vorstellung den Output natürlicher Sprache steuern. Stichproben aus der Ilias belegen, dass homerische Verse diese Anforderung zur Gänze erfüllen. Dies unterstützt die Auffassung, wonach homerische Dichtung als mündlich im engeren Sinne bezeichnet werden darf.

Special communicative purpose as a factor in development of sociolinguistic similarities between unrelated languages – Tentative evidence from a group of singular linguae francae

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Abstract: Our study proposes that under certain conditions, some linguae francae (such as Sanskrit, Classical Arabic, Latin, or today's English) attain an additional and as of yet inadequately described status (Leonhardt, 2013). We term it here, for the sake of distinction, *lingua cosmopolitana*, and hypothesize that this very special language status constitutes a *quasi-universal linguistic phenomenon* (Dobrić et al., 2024). Following the general principles of *functionalism* (Bates & MacWhinney, 1989; Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2023) and *uniformitarianism* (Labov, 2006; Romaine, 1988), the study hypothesises that the similarity of a very specific communicative purpose for which two or more unrelated languages may be employed will change them in a similar way in terms of their sociolinguistic behaviour and linguistic form, even if spoken at radically different times and in different locales. To investigate that, our study focuses on contrasting six very distinct languages, all widely used as international media of communication (four from the Indo-European family, from two different branches and of various ages, one Afro-Asiatic language, and one Bantu language). Three are proposed as having achieved the proposed status (Sanskrit, Classical Arabic and Latin) and three as not having reached it when in international use (French, Spanish and KiSwahili). The results show clear distinctiveness of the former three languages and underline striking sociolinguistic similarities between them. In addition, English is then shown as potentially the latest embodiment of the lingua cosmopolitana status.

Key words: language status, language change, lingua franca, lingua cosmopolitana, historical sociolinguistics, Sanskrit, Classical Arabic, Latin, English

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The Greek Transcriptions of Hebrew in Hexapla Secunda: A Case of Language Contact in Writing

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Hexapla Secunda is a late-antiquity text attested in a palimpsest that transcribes the Hebrew Bible in Greek graphemes and is the earliest example of a fully vocalized Hebrew Bible text. The Greek graphemes are used to ensure a correct pronunciation of the unvocalized Hebrew text. Due to the very different alphabets of Greek and Hebrew this transcription is non-trivial and we describe the problems in establishing correspondences between the two languages.

We suggest to treat Hexapla Secunda as a witness of language contact and convergence between Biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek. We show how the analysis of Hexapla Secunda as a phonetic transcription allows us to make grounded assumptions for language perception and pronunciation between an Indo-European and a Semitic language. It is also interesting to compare the transcriptions of the Hebrew language with the Greek transcriptions of Akkadian texts ("graeco-babyloniaca"). The last are equally a case of contact language between an Indo-European language and a Semitic one, as they employ the Greek alphabet to transcribe the syllabic script of cuneiform.

In both cases, Akkadian and Hebrew, we analyse the contact between the two linguistic families from three points of view: (1) The influence of the Greek on the phonetics and phonology of the Hebrew and the Akkadian texts; (2) The problems of the phonetic transcription of a Semitic language in the Greek alphabet; (3) Language Change phenomena of Semitic Languages that are only attested in the transcriptions