

Distinguishing Multiple Sources of Syntactic Interference: the Case of Classical Armenian

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Background Classical Armenian is an Indo-European language and arguably forms its own branch of this language family. Owing to the extensive influence of West Middle Iranian languages, however, it was assumed to belong to the Iranian family until seminal work by Hübschmann (1875) and Meillet (1911–2) disproved this assumption. Next to contact with Iranian languages, Armenian was influenced to varying degrees also by Greek, Old Georgian, and Urartian (Clackson 1994; Gippert 2005; Greppin and Diakonoff 1991).

Issues Armenian syntax was only significantly influenced by West Middle Iranian (Meyer 2017) and Greek (Muradyan 2012), but in two different ways: contact-induced changes due to Iranian influence are all-pervasive, whereas those based on Greek are limited to specific genres of mainly—but not exclusively—translation literature (cf. e.g. Meyer 2018). The two contact situations are also different: Parthian, the most relevant Iranian contact language, was spoken by the ruling class in Armenia for four centuries; Greek, by contrast, was more limited in use and relevant mainly in religious and academic circles. The translations made from Greek in some cases do not closely conform to the language of the contemporary non-translated literature, possibly functioning as cribs or *aide-mémoires* for Armenian students of the *trivium* instead (Terian 1980); in other cases, like that of the Bible translation, Greek influence is less stark and noticeable only in details, e.g. questions of case usage.

Questions Given the two different contact situations and distributions of contact-induced changes, the following questions are worth considering:

- (1) What are the differences between the types of changes resulting from different situations?
 - (2) How, if at all, does methodology differ in investigating changes in these different contexts?
 - (3) What are the conditioning factors of these changes, or: why these syntagmata and not others?
- This paper aims to address mainly questions (1) & (2); owing to its broad nature, only contributions to a more comprehensive answer to question (3) can be made on the basis of the data discussed here.

Approach & Method This paper will make use of the data from non-translated texts used in Meyer’s study of Iranian influences on Armenian (2017), and the those from translated texts as analysed by Muradyan (2012); these datasets will be supplemented with data from the Bible translation. A selected set of the most common contact-induced changes in each corpus will be analysed as to shared and differentiable features, e.g. as regards frequency, morphological expression, typological distance, etc., but also with reference to socio-historical variables. In this manner, the paper aims to address question (1) above.

Preliminary Results The study suggests that the key difference between Greek-based and Iranian-based syntactic changes is twofold:

- (1) Greek-based syntagmata are direct copies of the original, as is evident from the comparison of translation and original (e.g. direct copy of counterfactual conditionals); contact-induced changes from Iranian, however, are not direct copies, but adaptations of Iranian originals (Matras and Sakel 2007), so for instance Armenian tripartite morphosyntactic alignment in the perfect based on West Middle Iranian split-ergative alignment.
- (2) Greek-based syntagmata on the whole are idiolectal and rarely grammaticalised, and primarily occur in specific genres and registers (\approx translation literature); changes derived from Iranian originals are found across the corpus and are fully grammaticalised.

While both the type and pervasiveness of contact-induced changes in Armenian syntax differ in origin, this is not the result of linguistic factors, but of variables like time-depth of contact, relative importance of the contact language in society, and other extra-linguistic factors.

The answer to question (2), concerning the difference in methods of investigation in different contact situations, is found primarily in the different use of materials and the usefulness of grammaticalisation tests (extent of actualisation, diachronic frequency, etc.).

- In the case of Greek, originals are extant for direct comparison. In the case of Iranian, attested originals largely pre- or post-date the contact timeframe; furthermore, Armenian itself is only attested in writing after the end of the key contact period. The latter scenario therefore relies more heavily on reconstructed data.
- As regards grammaticalisation tests, it is evident that Iranian-based syntagmata ‘nativise’ and undergo predictable changes, e.g. the loss of tripartite alignment in the perfect under pressure from the dominant nominative-accusative pattern elsewhere; most Greek-based patterns are never properly grammaticalised and therefore do not undergo such changes. This can be shown by means of statistical analysis.

Coming back to question (3), no clear answer presents itself on the basis of contrasting these datasets alone. Extent of contact, both temporally and in society, appear to be more important *prima facie* than purely linguistic factors, however.

One sentence summary Differences in contact scenarios determine the fate of contact-induced changes in syntax, and different methods are needed to investigate them.

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