

OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE CONTACT PHENOMENON FROM THE LINGUISTS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of language contact occurs due to the influence of social-linguistic factors, community dynamics, and international interactions. Consequently, it is a social phenomenon, a cultural encounter where languages coexist and mutually influence each other within a communicative community. Language contact contributes to the formation of diglossia, bilingualism, and borrowed words; phenomena of convergence, and interference; and the emergence of pidgin and creole. This article provides a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of language contact from the perspectives of Vietnamese and Korean linguists, based on data from Vietnamese and Korean. The research results can be preliminary applied to conceptualize the phenomenon of language contact, contributing to the expansion of studies on language transformation and effective application in language teaching and learning practices.*

Keywords: *language contact, bilingualism, loanword, pidgin, diglossia, language interference.*

I. Introduction

As Markey (1982:170) noted, “all languages are contact languages.” In the era of globalization, languages, as the most crucial means of human communication, can spread, interact, and mutually influence each other. This emphasizes the pervasive nature of language contact, especially in the contemporary globalized context where linguistic interactions have become increasingly prevalent and impactful. The dissemination of languages can create

influences on the languages that come into contact with each other, undergoing linguistic situations. According to Nguyen Van Khang (2014:143), society is a factor that generates language contact, and language variations are the consequences of this language contact. This is evident in the interactions among languages within a country, especially in multi-ethnic and multilingual nations like Vietnam. The instances of Sino-Vietnamese words, Hanja (Sino-Korean words), and Kanji

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(Chinese characters in Japanese) that are derived from the Chinese language in Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese exemplify the outcomes of prolonged language contact. The presence of this vocabulary in Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese can be traced back to historical interactions between these countries with China.

II. Theoretical Framework

Our survey results indicate that research on language contact has been present since early on, such as U. Weinreich's "Languages in Contact" (1953). In terms of research content, linguists focused on key issues related to language contact, including language maintenance, language shift, language death, language revival, etc (Park Yong Han, 2020:175). Traditional language contact studies primarily relied on the perspective of historical linguistics, emphasizing the processes of differentiation and transformation of languages. However, modern language contact studies are considered a part of social linguistics, with a focus on language use with diverse forms influenced by social factors such as gender, age, and social strata. Therefore, the field of language contact concentrates on addressing issues such as pidgin, creole, bilingualism, diglossia, loanwords, and language interference.

III. Method

To survey the overview of the language contact phenomenon, we employed a multi-faceted research approach. Initially, we delved into the specialized research conducted by Bui Khanh The (2016), which included

translations of pivotal works related to language contact from English-language sources. This foundational step provided a crucial framework for our exploration. Subsequently, we expanded our review to encompass research in social linguistics, as evidenced by Nguyen Van Khang's work (2014) and pertinent articles from various researchers disseminated in specialized journals and conference proceedings. Our survey extended to Korean-language research, with studies by Park Young Bae (2003), Seung Gi Cheol (2004), and Park Yong Han (2020). This expanded range of sources enriched our understanding of language contact from different linguistic perspectives. Our survey delved into researchers' perspectives on fundamental aspects, covering: i) The concept of "language contact"; ii) Approaches to studying language contact; iii) Factors influencing language contact; iv) Channels of language contact; and v) Consequences of language contact. The diverse sources and methodologies employed aim to provide a basic understanding of the intricacies of language contact.

IV. Results and discussion

4.1 *The concept of language contact*

Einar Haugen (1958:253) stated that "every linguist sooner or later encounters issues related to language contact." According to Haugen, André Martinet was the first to introduce this term, later widely used by U. Weinreich in studies related to languages in contact. The collective opinion of researchers on the concept of language contact can be synthesized as follows:

According to Nguyen Van Khang (2014:147-150), language contact is the phenomenon where multiple languages coexist within a community, influencing each other and leading to linguistic outcomes. Language contact is a social phenomenon with a social dimension and constitutes a form of cultural interaction. In Bui Khanh The's perspective (2016: 278-281), language contact is described as the blending of languages, involving interactive influences that enrich each other. The process includes both convergence and generalization, resulting in an amalgamation of languages. According to Nguyen Thien Giap (2010:411-412; 2016:497), language contact is defined as the mutual influence between languages within a bilingual or multilingual society, driven by communication needs. The close proximity, invasion, or migration can lead to linguistic interchange when speakers of different languages come together in a single community.

Park Han Yong (2020:175) suggests that, in the process of social interaction, languages form relationships with diverse linguistic forms. Park Young Bae (2003: 152-153) emphasizes that it occurs in real-life situations where individuals interacting with each other use more than one language, particularly when communication is necessary between users of different languages.

Therefore, in language contact, languages interact and blend, influencing each other to create diversity and innovation in conveying information. Language contact can

involve “convergence” (using a specific language) and “generalization” (using various languages). Language contact can lead to the formation of multilingual communities, initially possibly due to invasion or migration, but nowadays, it can result from interactions and collaborations between different communities. Language contact involves not only linguistic interaction but also cultural interaction, reflecting changes in lifestyles, perspectives, and values within multilingual communities. In the present day, with technological advancements, online interactions have become frequent and widespread, bridging geographical distances between regions and countries.

4.2. Approaches to the study of Language contact

Traditional linguistics argues that language contact begins with learning a language other than one's native language. It involves the transition from monolingualism to multilingualism, shaping a stable multilingual cognitive structure. Discussing language contact involves addressing structural contact (internal interaction) and functional contact (external interaction) of languages. Internal interaction refers to the interactive relationship between two or more languages within the human mind, leading to blending and borrowing of terms. External interaction occurs when an individual uses two or more languages in communication, often resulting in code-switching or code-mixing phenomena. Three possibilities arise in language contact: the influence of the language

being used on the language being acquired[†], vice versa, and complementary effects between the two languages. During language contact, variations may occur in the languages involved, forming what linguists call an “interlanguage” (Nguyen Van Khang, 2014: 144-145).

Language contact is a common phenomenon, emerging in multilingual settings under the influence of various social language factors. According to Nguyen Van Khang (2014:146-147), sociolinguistics views language contact as a social phenomenon. The outcomes of language contact are achieved through the expansion or diffusion of a shared language, influenced by the base language to the target language. Language contact gives rise to borrowing phenomena and only occurs when there is an influence and permeation of languages in a multilingual society where members are relatively proficient in multilingualism. Through this process, the concept of language contact is expanded to include both direct and indirect contact, interactions between languages, and interactions between languages and dialects (Bui Khanh The, 2016: 281).

According to Park Yong Han (2020:174), Korean linguists pay attention to language contact between the Korean language and other foreign languages, contact between dialects of the Korean language, the phenomenon of bilingual use by Korean diaspora and multicultural families. Vietnamese linguists are more

concerned with language contact between Vietnamese and foreign languages, between Vietnamese and languages of ethnic minorities, between dialects of Vietnamese and dialects of ethnic minorities v.v. (Nguyen Van Khang, 2014: 153).

4.3. Factors influencing language contact

Nguyen Van Khang (2014: 147-148) emphasizes social - languages factors. When two ethnic groups speaking different languages come into contact, several tendencies may arise: i) The language of an economically and politically powerful ethnic group will have a significant influence on the language of a weaker ethnic group; ii) The language of a culturally advanced ethnic group will exert a significant influence on the language of an ethnic group with lower cultural background or perceived backwardness; iii) The language of an ethnic group with a larger population will influence the language of a smaller ethnic group; iv) The degree of closeness and intimacy between ethnic groups can either increase or decrease the speed of language contact and mutual influence; v) Religious relationships between ethnic groups can lead to language contact and influence between languages.

Linguists also assert that the nature of a language itself is one of the factors influencing the language contact process. Languages that share familiarity or proximity are more susceptible to mutual influence and borrowing. Languages

[†] The languages being referred to here can be understood as the mother tongue (L1) and the acquired language as the second language (L2).

without a writing system or those that have not yet developed one (or have lost it) tend to be influenced by and adopt features from languages with a writing system (Nguyen Van Khang, 2014: 148-149). Therefore, in each specific case, it is necessary to examine whether the phenomenon of language transformation is more influenced by internal factors, the inherent characteristics of the language, or external factors.

4.4. Channels of language contact

Language contact in the past mainly occurred in situations of colonization through wars or large-scale migrations of entire ethnic groups. In modern times, language contact takes diverse forms based on comprehensive interactions in economics, politics, culture, etc., between nations, trends in international study, international marriages, migration, etc. (Park Yong Han, 2020: 175).

According to Nguyen Van Khang (2014: 149), there are three ways of language contact: i) Influence through oral communication due to regular contact between members of different ethnic groups speaking different languages; ii) Influence through written materials, with one of the primary channels being through translated works, between ethnic groups with a writing system; iii) Combined influence through both oral communication and written materials, occurring in daily interactions and involving a writing system.

The trends in language contact are believed to be influenced to some extent by political and socio-economic factors. Depending on the level of cooperation between nations, the interactions can take place on a broad or narrow scale, with varying depth and limitations. Researchers also identify two main trends: voluntary language contact and forced language contact. Voluntary language contact arises when languages are used collaboratively within a community, as seen in the case of languages spoken by ethnic minority groups in Vietnam, where Vietnamese and minority languages coexist[‡]. Forced language contact is associated with the assimilation of ethnic groups, including linguistic assimilation, as observed during periods of Northern domination (under the rule of China) or French colonialism.

According to Seung Gi Cheol (2004: 113), language contact is the inevitable interaction and conflict between individuals or groups using different languages in communication, and it also implies cultural contact within dialectal regions. Nguyen Van Khang (2014: 150) emphasizes that language contact is essentially a form of cultural interaction in a broad sense. It can be considered as an aspect of cultural contact, and the linguistic interplay is one facet of the broader process of cultural dissemination and interaction. Thus, the integration of cultures can be identified, in part, through the phenomenon of language contact and borrowing. Loanwords can be seen

[‡] Currently, in accordance with the policy of preserving languages and cultures of ethnic minorities in Vietnam government, languages of ethnic minorities such as Tay, Ha Nhi, Ba Na, Cham, Thai, etc., are chosen for use in various media and publications.

as emissaries of the culture from which the language originates. Cultural factors from external sources are often expressed through languages in various forms, primarily in the following two ways: i) The form of a culturally rooted language imported (translated); ii) The form of the original culturally rooted language imported (either unchanged or with slight modifications).

4.5. Consequences of language contact

4.5.1. The formation of language strata

In the research of Nguyen Van Khang (2014: 150-151), the mutual influence between languages in contact is the origin of the concepts of stratum, such as: i) Substratum: Refers to a language or dialect influenced by a dominant language. In our context, the dominant language is the national language; ii) Superstratum: Refers to a language or dialect with authority but influenced by a language or dialect with a lower status; iii) Adstratum: Refers to the interactive relationship resulting from long-term coexistence in language contact. Andre' Martinet (1952) argues that mutual influence between languages in contact is one of the most powerful driving forces behind language change. The integrity of two languages in contact can be maintained if both languages have equal prestige and status, often observed in cases of bilingualism or individual multilingualism (Bui Khanh The, 2016: 266-267).

4.5.2. The phenomenon of bilingualism

L.V. Scherba (1975) contends that bilingualism is often understood as the ability to master two languages

and switch between them, using each language interchangeably depending on the communicative context (at this point, speakers code-switch in spoken communication). The nature of bilingualism depends on the mastery of non-native languages of the bilingual individual. Bilingualism can be seen as a compilation of language variations that bilingual individuals possess, and the rules governing their use depend on specific social and private relationships in bilingual individuals. He also emphasizes the significant relationship between the language behavior of bilingual individuals and the social context in which bilingualism occurs (Bui Khanh The, 2016: 283-286). Nguyen Van Khang (2014: 113-114) suggests that the terms bilingualism and multilingualism can be considered interchangeable.

From the Korean linguistic perspective, Park Young Bae (2003: 158-159) asserts that, along with language convergence, language switching is often referred to as code switching, considered a prominent characteristic of bilingual communities (where the majority of members have the ability to use two or more languages). Nguyen Thien Giap (2010: 138) defines it as: "The change of language or dialect during communication... A bilingual individual using one language or dialect for communication may switch to another language when influenced by the context or situation. Code switching can occur when the communication partner changes." According to Nguyen Van Khang (1999: 224-228), there are two types of code switching: i) Situational code switching (due to changes in communication

context); ii) Metaphorical code switching (aiming to change communication style or role relationships). The author identifies several types of code switching, including: i) Unmarked code switching; ii) Marked code switching; iii) Investigative code switching. The purposes of code switching are diverse, such as highlighting or emphasizing points, gaining an advantage in communication, maintaining secrecy v.v.

4.5.3. The language borrowing

Language borrowing is the process of importing elements from one language into another, most prominently manifested in the group of borrowed words within a language. Nguyen Van Khang (2014: 151) argues that, in a broad sense, borrowed words are those borrowed from one language to another, encompassing both homogenized and non-homogenized word groups. In a narrow sense, homogenized borrowed words undergo the assimilation of the lending language in terms of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar. Thus, homogenized borrowed words can be understood to be distinct from loanwords, which are words borrowed but not assimilated.

Park Young Bae (2003: 157-158) suggests that, at the beginning, words and grammatical structures from another language are temporarily adopted in one language. This process involves adaptation and assimilation to the sound and grammatical structure of the new language. If extensive vocabulary borrowing occurs, there must be a bilingual community of individuals using at least two languages... Recently, language mixing is one of the language contact phenomena that linguists

are interested in. This phenomenon involves two directions of contact: the grammar of one language interacts with the vocabulary of another language and vice versa. Unlike borrowing, language mixing is relatively rare and is believed to occur infrequently in practice (Park Young Bae, 2003: 161). However, along with the trend of globalization, in reality, we often encounter examples of using both foreign words and native vocabulary in communication. For example, in a Korean person might use the word “스마트폰” (smartphone) in a sentence while communicating in Vietnamese. For instance: “Nowadays, everyone owns a 스마트폰.” In this case, “스마트폰” is a combination of the original English term, the pronunciation style of Korean, and it is used in a Vietnamese sentence by a person of Korean nationality, speaking Korean as their mother tongue.

4.5.4. The phenomenon of language interference

Nguyen Thien Giap (2010: 195) argues that interference is “a transformation in one language due to the influence of another language.” Vocabulary interference is evident in borrowed words, imitative word formation, and hybrid compound words. Phonological interference occurs when bilinguals use the sounds of one language according to the rules of another language. Grammatical interference is the phenomenon where the grammar pattern of one language is used and integrated into the grammar system of another language.

In the opinion of Nguyen Van Khang (2014: 151), the phenomenon of

interference is understood as the influence of one language on another, causing the influenced language to undergo borrowing at the individual or community level. Depending on the degree of interference, different consequences may arise: Individual interference is the source of errors, while community interference transforms the language and creates community variants. These variants may develop into language forms, even new languages.

The Prague school linguists refer to interference as the phenomenon where languages, during contact, deviate from their inherent standards. Interference can be explored and illustrated by describing the linguistic data of two bilingual individuals, including experimental data collected through psychological methods. In other words, studying language contact from a synchronic perspective is necessary, especially in micro-level research on the phenomenon of language interference (Bui Khanh The, 2016: 288).

4.5.5. The language convergence

Nguyen Van Khang (2014: 152) suggests that convergence is the phenomenon where languages develop similar features when in contact. Integration is the process in which languages of the same origin gradually eliminate distinctive elements and may eventually evolve into a unified language. Divergence is considered the development of different features among dialects, a process that can lead to the formation of a new language.

Regarding language convergence, linguists argue that macro-level research

(from the historical perspective) is a suitable and reasonable approach. The task of linguists is to rely on historical data, reconstruct the language transformation process, describe the changes in the rules of syntactic analysis, and synthesize the structures under consideration. The result of this descriptive process is a set of rules that can indicate a simple and clear way of constructing and formatting sentences to express corresponding relationships. These rules ensure the clearest and most reliable expression of ideas, helping to understand them explicitly and confidently (Bui Khanh The, 2016: 288-291).

The phenomenon of language switching or code-switching requires individuals engaging in communication to proficiently use two languages. However, language convergence is a phenomenon where languages in contact gradually exhibit more similarities through the usage and transformation of grammatical structures within a language community. The transformation and convergence of languages during language contact often depend on individuals who are bilingual, proficient in two languages (Park Young Bae, 2003: 159).

4.5.6. The formation of Pidgin and Creole language

To foster language contact phenomena such as borrowing, code-switching, and language convergence, it is essential to have a linguistic community where a significant portion or all members can proficiently use two or more languages. Pidgin is the result of the contact process where individuals acquire a language incompletely. Pidgin, in this context, is

a communication strategy of adults who can express another language besides their native language. This becomes a form of auxiliary language developed to fulfill the need for communication among individuals using different languages (Park Young Bae, 2003: 160). Nguyen Thien Giap (2010: 409) defines pidgin as “a language that develops as a contact language when groups of speakers of different languages attempt to communicate with each other on a regular basis.” He shows that, the characteristics of pidgin are typically “limited vocabulary and simplified grammatical structure.”

Park Young Bae (2003: 160-168) refers to Sebba’s (1997) perspective on

the characteristics of pidgin as follows: i) Lack of grammatical complexity; ii) Lack of morphological complexity; iii) Clear semantic content; iv) Vocabulary minimization. He states that when a pidgin language is acquired as the first language (L1), it gradually becomes the native language of the user. At this point, the pidgin language has undergone creolization, resulting in the emergence of a creole language. These languages do not have enough time to form stable structures in a short period.

The comparison between pidgin and creole languages can be summarized based on Park Young Bae (2003: 168-170) as below.

	Pidgin	Creole
Similarities	Simple grammatical structure, a limited vocabulary but still systematic in terms of phonetics and vocabulary, with grammatical rules like other languages.	
	The differences in structure are minimal, even in terms of functionality.	
Difference	Adults acquire and use it as a second language (L2)	Children acquire and use it as their first language (L1).
	=> The acquisition strategy for L2 differs from the acquisition strategy for L1 in children.	
	Pidgin is the result of L2 acquisition, so it does not need to follow the necessary blueprint for language acquisition.	Creole is formed through intergenerational transmission and is acquired by children as L1, so it needs to follow the acquisition trajectory.
	Adults speak at a slower pace but still include all the grammatical elements.	Children speak at a faster pace and may simplify some grammatical elements.

Nguyen Thien Giap (2010: 300) refers to creole as a “mixed language” and also considers creole to be: “a language derived from a pidgin.” So, when a pidgin is created in a multilingual society, children born into that society will acquire and use it to communicate with each other. Over time, the pidgin gradually transforms into a fully-fledged language with rich vocabulary and grammatical structures. This natural language is what is referred to as a creole, and the process is known as language creolization.

4.5.7. Discussion

We can tentatively establish the internal concept of the term “language contact” in the field of sociolinguistics as follows: i) It is a social phenomenon with a social nature; ii) It occurs due to the need for communication, taking place in the process of social interaction; iii) It happens among individuals using different languages or dialects; iv) It involves blending, influencing, and integrating with each other, resulting in various diverse consequences;

- v) Multilingual communities are often formed through invasion or migration, nowadays through collaborative exchanges;
- vi) Language contact is simultaneously a cultural encounter.

The overall results show that there are two approaches to studying language contact: Traditional linguistics views language contact as a process of moving from monolingualism to multilingualism. Sociolinguistics sees language contact as a social phenomenon with a social nature. Therefore, the research approach to language contact has shifted from a focus solely on the quantity of languages used to emphasizing the social aspect of the phenomenon. Factors influencing language contact include social factors and languages, the inherent advantages that participants of the new language have, the nature of the language itself, and the influence of the linguistic context. It is crucial to examine the impact of internal and intrinsic factors of languages and external contextual factors.

About communication channels, one can mention contact through spoken and written language; voluntary and forced contact; contact and conflict through cultural interaction and cultural integration... The consequences of language contact include the formation of language layers; the emergence of language borrowing phenomena under the influence of the dominant language; the phenomenon of language interference (at the individual and community levels) during the language acquisition process; the phenomenon of language convergence with the integration of similar features of the languages in contact; the development of pidgin languages (in adults) and creole languages (in children)... Reality shows the need for more objective evaluations from

linguistic experts regarding the positive and negative impacts of these outcomes.

To gain a better understanding of language contact, it is essential to undertake the following tasks: First, there is a need for more comprehensive and expanded surveys that encompass related works in different languages. Second, research efforts should focus on examining and summarizing the perspectives of linguists on the outcomes of language contact. Third, based on these findings, effectively apply the research results to the practice of intercultural communication and language teaching and learning, both generally and specifically in the context of language integration in today's era.

V. Conclusion

Essentially, language contact refers to the reciprocal influence between languages, where they mutually impact each other. In terms of outcomes, language contact leads to mutual enrichment, resulting in phenomena like language borrowing, interference, and the emergence of pidgin and creole languages. Language contact also involves convergence, integration, and divergence. Positioned within intercultural communication, language contact is a facet of cultural interaction. Various forms of contact exist, including interactions between languages, dialects, national languages, and dialects.

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HIỆN TƯỢNG TIẾP XÚC NGÔN NGỮ (THEO QUAN ĐIỂM CỦA CÁC NHÀ NGÔN NGỮ)

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Tóm tắt: Hiện tượng tiếp xúc ngôn ngữ xảy ra do tác động từ các yếu tố xã hội - ngôn ngữ, tính cộng đồng và giao lưu quốc tế, do vậy đây là một hiện tượng xã hội, là tiếp xúc văn hóa, trong đó các ngôn ngữ cùng tồn tại và ảnh hưởng lẫn nhau trong một cộng đồng giao tiếp. Tiếp xúc ngôn ngữ góp phần hình thành nên ngôn ngữ lưỡng tầng, song ngữ, từ vay mượn; hiện tượng quy tụ, giao thoa; hình thành tiếng bồi, ngôn ngữ lai pha. Bài viết thực hiện phân tích khái quát và tổng hợp chung về hiện tượng tiếp xúc ngôn ngữ từ quan điểm của các nhà Việt ngữ học và Hàn ngữ học dựa trên nguồn dữ liệu từ tiếng Việt và tiếng Hàn. Kết quả của nghiên cứu có thể ứng dụng bước đầu vào việc hình thành khung khái niệm về Hiện tượng tiếp xúc ngôn ngữ, từ đó đóng góp vào việc mở rộng các nghiên cứu về quá trình biến đổi của ngôn ngữ, vận dụng hiệu quả vào thực tiễn dạy - học ngôn ngữ.

Từ khóa: tiếp xúc ngôn ngữ, song ngữ, từ vay mượn, ngôn ngữ lưỡng tầng, giao thoa ngôn ngữ.

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