Language Contact
Theoretical and Empirical Studies

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The substratum in grammar and discourse

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Substratum effects can vary substantially in their salience: those involving smaller domains of language, such as vocabulary and clause-level grammar, can be conspicuous to anyone outside of the immediate speech community, while those involving multiple clauses or larger stretches of discourse can be subtle. Substratum effects conditioned by larger contexts can be easily overlooked, yet they can be pervasive, shaping the way information is presented and adding special stylistic dimensions to the language of which listeners outside of the community may be unaware.

Some subtle substratum effects can be observed in several communities in Northern California. Central Pomo is a California Indian language, indigenous to a region one hundred miles north of San Francisco. It is one of seven distinct languages of the Pomoan family. Several other unrelated languages are also indigenous to the area, including Yuki to the north, Patwin to the east, and Wappo and several Miwok languages to the south. All of the languages contain lexical evidence of contact dating from aboriginal times. There was apparently extensive intermarriage among members of these very small communities, and the pattern has continued into the present. People seem to have had a pragmatic attitude toward language, learning new languages readily but expressing little emotion toward any special beauties of one language over another.

The first major wave of European contact to affect Central Pomo was Spanish. The end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth brought Spanish missionaries and Mexican settlers into California. A large number of Spanish nouns remain in modern Central Pomo for items introduced during the early nineteenth century: tools, clothing, food, etc.

In the mid-nineteenth century, California was transferred from Mexico to the United States. The Central Pomo lost most of their land and began working for white ranchers. English-speaking missionaries began to arrive, and by the early twentieth century children were attending school in English. One Central Pomo man recalls that when he left the Hopland
Rancheria in 1925 for boarding school, Central Pomo was still spoken in most households. When he returned in 1935, the language of most of these same households, apart from those of a few older people, was English. Speakers alive today cannot remember anyone who was completely monolingual in Central Pomo.

At present there are three Central Pomo communities: Point Arena/Manchester on the coast, and the Hopland and Yokaya Rancherias about forty miles inland, seven miles apart. There is still a handful of Central Pomo speakers in each community, most over the age of seventy five, but the language is not normally used in everyday conversation. The effects of English on Central Pomo are as might be expected. English words of all categories are sometimes borrowed for concepts that have no Central Pomo labels. More often, speakers simply switch to English when discussing non-traditional topics. (For a detailed description of the effects of Spanish and English contact on Central Pomo see Mithun 1990.)

At the same time, some of the English now spoken in these communities shows influences of the Central Pomo substratum. Community residents have remarked that they can identify individuals who have grown up on a Central Pomo rancheria on the basis of their English alone. Some intonational and lexical traces of Central Pomo appear, but grammatical and discourse effects are more pervasive. ¹

1. The lexicon

Words for specifically Central Pomo cultural items appear on rare occasions in English discussions of traditional objects and customs.

(1) Put ?ám leaf on there? (?ám ‘soapweed’)
(2) Maybe they put p’dú out there. (p’dú ‘acorn’)

A more subtle lexical effect of the Central Pomo substratum is the relatively high frequencies of certain expressions. A phrase ‘and again too’ for example appears often, as in the beginning of the sentence in (3), part of a discussion about netting quail in a tree.

(3) And again too,
    how they gonna ñaakaw with that ... (ñaakaw ‘catch’)
    here’s that q’ulé. (q’ulé ‘tree’)
This English phrase is a loan-translation of a Central Pomo expression typically used to present another side of a discussion or an additional point. The high frequency of the Central Pomo model has affected the frequency of its counterpart in English.

(4)  Méen ʔihlakah...²
    méen ʔi=hlak=ay

    so  be=AGAIN=ALSO
    'And then again...'

(In the examples cited here all words on a line are part of a single intonation unit in the sense of Chafe: "a sequence of words combined under a single, coherent intonation contour, usually preceded by a pause" [1987: 22]. In the Central Pomo examples, the first line represents the material as spoken, the second a morphological segmentation, the third a literal gloss, and the fourth a free translation.)

2. Grammar

Grammatical structures whose domain is a single clause tend to be obvious to speakers and analysts alike, while those conditioned by contexts covering larger segments of speech tend to be less so. As in many language-contact situations, substratum effects on morphology and syntax are variable. Within a single conversation, an individual speaker will typically show a mixture of alternants in identical contexts.

2.1. Clause-level domains

Among the clause-level phenomena that can show Central Pomo substratum influence are verb inflection, nominal number inflection, indefinite marking on nominals, and lexical gap questions.

2.1.1. Verb inflection

Central Pomo verb morphology can be complex, including distinctions of number and aspect. First, second, or third person, and past or present tense, are not usually distinguished, however.
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(5) pʰ̑déeʔwan
    pʰ-đé-ʔw-an
BY.SWINGING—move-AROUND-IMPRF
'swim around/swam around'

Similar distinctions are often omitted in English.

(6) If a,
    what about if rabbit,
    big one come,
    that break the string?

(7) And I haven't done it because she say wait.

2.1.2. Number

Number marking on nouns is not obligatory in Central Pomo. Some nouns and all pronouns referring to human beings have both singular and plural forms, but number is not normally specified for non-humans. In (8) for example, the Central Pomo noun for 'berry' contains no number marker, although it refers to many berries.

(8) Hôskʷonʔo ʔel ?maya
    hôskʷonʔo ʔel ?=ma-ya
    berry the COP=2-PL
    'Don't waste
    yóọ²-ts'eeć'kʰe
    yóọ²-ts'e-ć=kʰe
    waste-GOING.TO-IMPRF.PL=INFV not-IMPRF
    the berries.'

Similarly, in these communities, English nouns referring to multiple non-humans often appear without plural markers.

(9) They're very fond of fish...
    and berry.

Those referring to human beings are generally inflected for number.

2.1.3. Indefinite articles

Central Pomo contains a definite article, the enclitic ʔel, but there is no indefinite article. (10) is the opening of a legend in which two characters are introduced.
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(10) šéemi ʔdoma
šéemi ʔ = doma
long.ago COP = QUOT
‘Long ago, they say,

p'šé báyaakay
p'šé báya = kay
deer man = ALSO
(a) man deer

p'šé máațakay,
p'šé máața = kay
deer woman = ALSO
and (a) woman deer.’

When the same speaker retold the story in English, the first noun phrases contained no indefinite article, although the second one did.

(11) Long time ago,
was ...
man deer,
and a woman deer.

This variability is typical. (12) was part of a conversation.

(12) A: So she ..
    she sings a song.
    That’s why she ..

B: She sing Indian song?
A: Yeah. Indian song.

Definite articles are generally not omitted in English.

2.1.4. Lexical-gap question

Central Pomo lexical-gap questions involve no subject-verb inversion comparable to English. Interrogation is shown by an enclitic on the first word.

(13) Q’ówa mual yhéen?
q’ó = wa mual yhé- n
what = Q 3 do-IMPRF
English question-word questions in these communities often follow a similar pattern, showing no inversion. Without inversion, do-support is unnecessary.

(14) And how they make that to slip then?
(15) What they call that?

2.2. Multi-clause domains

Grammatical structures involving contexts larger than a single clause show more subtle substratum effects. Some of the most characteristic are the use of pronouns and clause linking.

2.2.1. The use of pronouns

In Central Pomo, once a central person or entity has been introduced, this participant need not be overtly respecified in every clause unless there is some discontinuity in the discussion. For this reason, many clauses contain no nouns or pronouns referring to arguments that would be subjects in English. In (16), for example, some people are referred to pronominally in the first clause, but there is no overt mention of them in subsequent clauses.

(16) Mùn'tuyak'e muul ł̣óq’ ʔוץ µün'tuyak'e
miño̱uyən’ = ḳe muul ł̣óq’ ʔוץ µün'tuyən’ = ḳe
3.PL = OBL that thing COP COP = 3.PL = OBL

‘They had things

moʔa qaawáač’kawʔḳe;
moʔa qa-wɔ'-ę*-ka-w = ḳe
food BITING-go-1MPRF.PL-CAUS-PRF = INF
for them to eat.

t’aɓó q’adijyamawʔḳe,
t’aɓó q’adi-č-ta-č-ma-w = ḳe
hay buy-SML-ME-SML-MA-PRF = INFV
Because (θ) had
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The same pattern of pronoun use appears in English in these communities. Continuing subjects are often not respecified in every clause or even every sentence.

(17) *In the morning early,*
*they get up,*
*before sunup,*
*(Ø) don’t eat,*
*(Ø) don’t drink water,*
*(Ø) going ...*
*(Ø) going out to hunt.*

2.2.2. Clause linking

Central Pomo contains a set of morphemes for overtly linking related clauses. They appear suffixed to the last word of each non-final clause in a series. Note the position of the marker -ba ‘and then’ in (18).

(18) *sélka ʔel ʔémmaba*
*sélka ʔel ʔé-m-ma-ba*
*fence the build-DOWN-MA-AND*
*‘(They) built the fence and*

*yhétəč’ba*
*yhét-ja-č’-ba*
*do-ME-IMPRF.PL-AND*
*did that and then*
Because the marker is suffixed to the first clause of a linked pair, it is part of the preceding intonation unit. The same intonation pattern often characterizes English conjoined clauses.

(19) See the women would .. sell sandwiches and, you know things like that and,

(20) The people that was taking care of it was getting old and .. They can't ... climb the .. hills ..

(21) They driving on that road way over that way, where the cattles are and steal the little cows. Little calves.

3. Discourse

Substratum effects are all the more subtle when they involve larger stretches of discourse. Although both speakers and hearers are typically not conscious of these effects, they may be pervasive.

3.1. Recalibration of pragmatic markedness

Many syntactic options in Central Pomo, as in other languages, indicate the importance of particular elements of information within the discourse as a whole. Especially significant information may be set off by certain syntactic devices such as word order, clefting, etc. The markedness of a particular construction may differ from one language to another. Such differences can result in discourse-conditioned substratum effects.
3.1.1. Word order

Central Pomo is characterized by flexible verb-final constituent order. Note that all nominals precede the verb in (22).

(22) $\text{Mi}^\text{?k}^\text{e} \quad \text{pëesu} \quad \text{?miili}$
$m\text{-}l^{=}\text{?k}^\text{e} \quad \text{pëesu} \quad ?^{=}m\text{-}l^{=}$
that-at=FROM money COP=that-AT=WITH
$\text{cååc}^{'} \quad \text{yawål} \quad \text{yaçol}$
$\text{cååc}^{'} \quad \text{yawål}=\text{yaçol}$
person all-OBL

'The money from the sale of that (mountain land)

$\text{qat}^{\text{ée}}\text{?yaw}$.
$\text{qat}^{\text{ée}}\text{-}\text{c}^{'}\text{-ya-w}$
give.PL-IMPREF.PL-DFOC-PRF
was distributed to everyone.'

The same order appears in many English sentences in these communities, as in (23).

(23) *Nice fence they had to build
to keep the cattle in.*

*That’s why we got fence over there.*

Left dislocation is of course perfectly grammatical in standard English, although it is highly marked pragmatically. The unmarked status of the equivalent word order in Central Pomo has apparently resulted in a recalibration of the markedness of English left dislocation in these communities, where it can appear frequently.

3.1.2. Cleft constructions

Central Pomo contains a cleft construction that is pervasive in the speech of some. Significant elements are set off by the copula $\text{?e}$.

(24) $\text{?idaaw} \quad \text{baasëi}^{'} \quad \text{?e} \quad \text{mun}$.
$\text{?idaaw} \quad \text{baasëi}^{'} \quad \text{?e} \quad \text{mun}$
awful bad COP 3

'She’s really a bad woman.'

It is not a highly marked construction in Central Pomo. Similar structures appear often in English.
3.2. Arrangement of information

Discourse in Central Pomo, as in a number of North American languages, often displays a particular arrangement of information: a simple clause is followed by elaborations, each filling in information. The sequence in (26) is quite typical.

    maka ?el ?el'si-ya-w=?k'ee
    land the sell-DFOC-PRF=INFV
    ‘The land would be sold.’

    dan=maa ?el ?doo ?el'si-ya-w=?k'ee
    mountain=land the COP=QUOT sell-DFOC-PRF=INFV
    ‘They said the mountain land would be sold.’

The same pattern appears in English in these communities.

(27) they gave them cattle.
    The government gave them cattle.
    Nice .. breed of cattle.

The effect is subtle but pervasive.

3.3. Couplet constructions

Like some other languages indigenous to the New World, Central Pomo is often characterized by couplet constructions. Pairs of intonationally and semantically parallel lines are used to make special points of importance to the discourse as a whole. Note the parallelism between the second and third lines in (28).

(28) fawhal yhé-ta-c'   ?el dáw?c'iyw
    fawhal yhé-ta-c'   ?el dáy-c'ti-w
    work do-ME-IMPRF.PL the want-RFL-IMPRF.PL-PRF
They don’t want to work

They paid him too.

Again, the substratum influence is subtle but pervasive.

4. Conclusion

Substratum effects can vary substantially with the size of the context they involve. Lexical effects may be highly salient but scarce when the culture of the speakers of the original language has undergone drastic change. Grammatical devices that express distinctions definable within the clause, such as tense, person, number, definiteness, and interrogation, may also be quite salient.

Those conditioned by larger stretches of speech, such as the use of zero anaphora for continuing topics, the linking of clauses, left dislocation and clefting of significant information, as well as the arrangement of information over series of clauses, may be very subtle. While substratum effects in these larger domains may result in standard grammatical con-
structions, they can provide speakers with stylistic options that not only structure discourse, but also add a special community flavor.

How long such substratum effects may remain in a language is still to be investigated. The features described here are clearly present in the English of some rancheria residents whose dominant language is not Central Pomo. They are fading, however, due to external circumstances. The Central Pomo communities are very small. The Hopland rancheria, for example, contained only eighteen houses until a few years ago when ten more were built. Most young people move away early and find spouses elsewhere. Few children have two parents from the same community. The children constitute a tiny minority in school and they are of course constantly exposed to standard English mass media. Now that tape recorders have made it possible to examine spontaneous connected speech in detail, it will be interesting to see the extent to which subtle substratum effects on grammar and discourse may live on within a large speech community after the original language has disappeared.

Notes

1. I am grateful to the following Central Pomo people who have generously shared their time and expertise: Mr. Jesse Frank, Mrs. Winifred Leal, and Mrs. Eileen Oropeza of Point Arena, Mrs. Salome Alcantra, Mrs. Florence Paoli, and the late Mrs. Clara Williams of the Yokaya Rancheria, the late Mrs. Alice Elliot and the late Mr. Mitchell Jack of the Hopland Rancheria, and especially Mrs. Frances Jack of the Hopland Rancheria, who assembled all of these people and who has worked with me energetically and patiently for over six years in documenting her language. All of the examples cited here are drawn from spontaneous connected speech, both narrative and conversational. Work on Central Pomo has been funded by the Survey of California and other Indian languages, the Academic Senate of the University of California, and Grant BNS-8891784 from the National Science Foundation.

2. The following abbreviations are used for glosses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAUS</td>
<td>causative</td>
<td>1 first person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>copula</td>
<td>2 second person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFOC</td>
<td>defocus</td>
<td>3 third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDF</td>
<td>indefinite human indirect object</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFV</td>
<td>infinitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPRF</td>
<td>imperfective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>multiple agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>multiple event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBL</td>
<td>oblique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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PL plural
PL.AC plural activity
PRF perfective
QUOT hearsay evidential
SML semelfactive

Sequences of dots represent pauses: two dots (.) indicate a very short pause, three (...) a somewhat longer pause.

References

Chafe, Wallace

Mithun, Marianne