

The role of language contact: adstrate influence

The question of the extent to which the Romance varieties diverged because of the influence of languages with which speakers of Latin came into contact as the Roman Empire collapsed and fragmented.

1 The Franks

1.1 Historical background

In 455 AD the Salian Franks reached the Somme; in 486 a Frankish army defeated Sygarius at Soissons and the territory between the Somme and the Seine (Neustria) was occupied. There was probably a long period of bilingualism: the German policy of equality between Franks and Gallo-Romans led to the need for a German-speaking *comes* also to speak Latin/Romance. Although eventually Latin came to dominate, the impact of Frankish is clear from the large number of loanwords in French.

1.2 Frankish loanwords

The semantic fields of Frankish borrowings reflect the nature of contact between Romance and Germanic speakers. They are mostly concrete nouns, together with some common adjectives (e.g. *frais*, *laid*).

Warfare: *bannière* 'banner', *écharpe* 'sash', *éperon* 'spur', *épieu*, 'spear', *étrier* 'stirrup', *fourreau* 'scabbard'

Colour adjectives: *bleu* 'blue', *brun* 'brown', *blond* 'fair', *blafard* 'pale', *blême* 'pale'

1.3 Did Frankish make any more systematic impact on Romance in northern France?

1.3.1 Phonology

- Preservation of initial /h/ in words of Germanic origin added a phoneme and is still reflected phonetically and morphologically in the MFr. 'h aspiré':

Lat. HORA > Fr. *heure* (*l'heure*, *les heures* [lez œR])

but

Germ. *HAGJA > Fr. *haie* (*la haie*, *les haies* [le ε])

Germ. > *HAPJA > Fr. *hache* (*la hache*, *les haches* [le aʃ])

An interesting phenomenon is

Lat. ALTU(M) > Fr. *haut*

which also has 'h aspiré' (*plus haut* [ply o]) — this may be due to a **CROSSED ETYMOLOGY** with Germ. HOH. Apart from this, 'h aspiré' is limited to Germanic loanwords and there are few (no?) **MINIMAL PAIRS** which depend on the presence or absence of 'h aspiré'.

But ‘*h aspiré*’ has been extended with recent loanwords from English: *le hardware*, *le handicap*.

- Germanic words beginning with /w/ may initially have been borrowed with /w/, which was a new phoneme (preserved in some northern and eastern areas: e.g. Picard *warder* = Fr. *garder*, *wage* = Fr. *gage*, *waires* = Fr. *guère*) or /gw/, which was a new combination of phonemes, but /gw/ has been reduced to /g/ in later French, so there is no impact on the phonological system:

Germ. WAHTA (cf. Eng. *watch*) > Fr. *guetter*
Germ. WARAND (cf. Eng. *warrant*) > Fr. *garant*

Again there is a possible crossed etymology in Lat. VESPA x Germ. WAPSA (cf. Eng. *wasp*) > Fr. *guêpe*.

- Features of French phonology that have been attributed to Germanic influence:
 - The erosion of post-tonic syllables, leading to the situation in Modern French where individual words are effectively only stressed on the final syllable (**OXYTONES**). (The vestigial vowel /ə/ remains in words deriving from a Latin final /a/ or to support a complex consonantal group:

Lat. BONA(M) > Fr. *bonne* [bɔn(ə)]
Lat. ARBORE(M) > Fr. *arbre* [ɑrbʁ(ə)]

However, erosion of unstressed syllables is frequent in Romance (see the **REDUCTION OF PROPAROXYTONES** in 2.3.1 below).

- Diphthongisation of Latin vowels in **FREE** syllables:

PĒDE(M) > *ped*
MĒ > *mei* > *moi*
*PŌTET > *puet* > *peut*
VŌTU(M) > *vœu*
but
PĒRDIT > *perd*
no examples
MŌRTE(M) > *mort*
no examples

However, the tendency to lengthen vowels in free syllables may be universal.

1.3.2 Morphology

Two common Germanic-derived suffixes, *-art* (*-ard*) and *-aut* (*-aud*), came to be used quite **PRODUCTIVELY** with Romance lexical stems: *vieillard* ‘old man’, *lourdaud* ‘oafish’.

1.3.3 Possible syntactic influence

- The development in OFr of verb-second word order and the obligatory expression of a subject.
- The development of a two-term demonstrative system.

2 The Arabs in the Iberian Peninsula

2.1 Historical background

711: Invasion of the Peninsula by Tariq ibn Ziyad, the governor of Tangiers. The Arab occupation was rapid (the progress of the Moorish forces was only definitively stopped at Poitiers in 732). Although Romance continued to be spoken as a domestic language (**MOZARABIC**) in areas under Moorish rule, where there must have been a very high degree of bilingualism, it is the contact of Arabic with the Romance varieties of the states of the Christian north that is crucial to the evolution of Romance.

2.2 Arabic loanwords

Borrowing into Castilian, Portuguese and Catalan is predominantly of nouns labelling concepts that are associated with Arab culture, and which had no exponent in Latin/Romance:

Water: *acequia* ‘irrigation channel’, *azud* ‘regulating dam’, *alberca* ‘reservoir’, *aljibe* ‘cistern’, *arcaduz* ‘well, bucket’, *noria* ‘well’.

Scientific: *cifra* ‘number’, *alquimia* ‘alchemy’, *alambique* ‘still’, *elixir* ‘elixir’, *alcohol* ‘alcohol’, *álcali* ‘alkali’, *azimut* ‘direction’, *cénit* ‘zenith’, *nadir* ‘nadir’.

Some possible SEMANTIC CALQUES from Arabic:

Sp. *infante* (< Lat. INFANTE(M) ‘infant’): ‘infant, child’ → ‘son of a noble, son of the king’, parallel to Ar. *walad* ‘child, heir to the throne’

Sp. *hidalgo* (< *hijo de algo*) ‘noble’, parallel to Ar. *ibn ad-dunyā* ‘son of wealth’

2.3 Did Arabic make any more systematic impact on Romance in the Iberian Peninsula?

2.3.1 Phonology

- No Arabic phoneme is borrowed into Romance.

In Mozarabic, the differences between the Arabic and Romance **SIBILANT** systems (Romance vs. Arabic) may have been responsible for the loss of the opposition between /s/ and /ʃ/ which remained a feature of *morisco* pronunciation until the 17th century:

Romance

/ts/ (CORONAL, AFFRICATE)

/s/ (APICAL)

/ʃ/ (PALATAL)

Arabic

/s/ س *sīn* (CORONAL)

/ʃ/ ص *ṣād* (‘emphatic’)

/ʃ/ ش *šīn* (PALATAL)

Morisco pronunciations: *moxca* /moʃka/ for Cast. *mosca*, *exto* /eʃto/ for Cast. *esto*.

However:

- Exchanges among the sibilant phonemes are quite frequent in northern Peninsular Romance, e.g. *chillar* < Lat. SIBILARE, *zueco* < Lat. SOCCU(m), *vejiga* < Lat. VESSICA.
- Portuguese, Castilian and Catalan merged the medieval sibilant phonemes in a number of different ways themselves (Pg. and Andalusian Cast. /ts/ and /s/ merge as /s/; Cast. /ts/ and /dz/ merge as /θ/, etc.)

- [This material is also covered in the Spanish Today course]
Borrowings from Arabic may have increased the number of ‘irregularly’ stressed words at a time when the general tendency in Castilian Romance was to reduce most Latin words to PAROXYTONES (words stressed on the penultimate syllable) if they ended in a vowel, or OXYTONES (words stressed on the final syllable) if they ended in a consonant:

PROPAROXYTONE (word stressed on the antepenultimate syllable) reduced to paroxytone:

Lat. SPECŪLU(M) > Sp. *espejo*

Lat. DIGĪTU(M) > Sp. *dedo*

Paroxytone reduced to oxytone:

Lat. PARĪĒTE(M) > Sp. *pared*

Lat. VĪCE(M) > Sp. *vez*

However, this process was not thoroughgoing: some Latin proparoxytones remain, especially those which had /a/ in the penultimate syllable, and because of the loss of a final vowel, these sometimes yield paroxytones which end in a consonant in Castilian:

Lat. FICATU(M) > Sp. *hígado*

Lat. CANTHARU(M) > Sp. *cántaro*

Lat. CAESPITE(M) > Sp. *césped*

Lat. HOSPITE(M) > Sp. *huésped*

Arabic loanwords:

oxytones ending in a vowel	paroxytones ending in a consonant	proparoxytones
<i>alfolí</i>	<i>azúcar</i>	<i>albóndiga</i>
<i>borceguí</i>	<i>almíbar</i>	<i>alhóndiga</i>
<i>maravedí</i>	<i>alcázar</i>	<i>acémila</i>
<i>albalá</i>	<i>almófar</i>	
<i>baladí</i>	<i>alférez</i>	

2.3.2 Morphology

Morphological influence is very limited:

- Frequent borrowing of the Arabic noun with the definite article (*al-*, etc.) incorporated with the word itself suggests a lack of awareness of the structure of Arabic. *Al-* is found with a small number of Romance stems (Sp. *almena* < Lat. MENA ‘battlements’, *almadreña* < Lat. *MATERINĒA ‘clog’, Sp. *almuerzo* < Lat. *ADMORDĪU(M) ‘lunch’).

- [This material is also covered in the Spanish Today course]
The Arabic adjectival inflection *-í* is generally restricted to lexical borrowings (e.g. *baladí*, *carmesí*); it is used in the (rare) Romance creations *alfonsí* (13th cent.) and *andalusí* (20th cent.), and a number of modern nationality adjectives: *marroquí*, *iraní*, *iraquí*.

2.3.3 Possible syntactic influence

Verb-first order in Castilian and Portuguese may parallel the (default) verb-first order of Arabic.

3 Romania

3.1 Historical background

The Romans withdrew from Dacia towards the end of the 3rd cent. AD as a result of Gothic incursions. Slavic (Bulgar) occupation in 6th cent.

Two theories concerning the origins of Romanian:

- The ‘original Dacia’ theory: that Latin was preserved in the Carpathians and Transylvanian Alps and then spread down to the Danube plain.
- The ‘migration’ theory: Latin was carried by migrations of peoples from Illyricum and Moesia (N. Bulgaria), where Latin was more firmly established.

3.2 Lexical borrowing

A different pattern from other Romance languages: many items of basic vocabulary, and many adjectives and verbs, are borrowings from Slavonic:

zid ‘wall’, *sticlă* ‘glass’, *plug* ‘plough’
drag ‘dear’, *bogat* ‘rich’, *gol* ‘naked’
iubi ‘to love’, *dărui* ‘to give’, *trebuie* ‘it is necessary’

Borrowings from Bulgarian and other neighbouring languages continued throughout the Middle Ages:

Albanian: *copil* ‘child’, *buză* ‘lip’
Greek: *drum* ‘road’, *frică* ‘fear’
Hungarian: *oraş* ‘town, city’, *gînd* ‘thought’, *fel* ‘type’, *seamă* ‘number, account’

The sheer number of such loanwords in Romanian means that any phoneme or morpheme which is characteristic of foreign borrowings is likely to be better integrated into the language.

3.3 Phonology

- /h/ was introduced (and is frequently preserved — it sometimes became /f/, e.g. PRAHU > *praf* ‘dust’) in Slavic and Hungarian loanwords: *hîrtie* (Slav.) ‘paper’, *pahar* (Hung.) ‘glass’.

- Otherwise, borrowings seem to have been assimilated, as elsewhere, though the range of consonant clusters was probably extended, e.g. the large number of words with initial *zdr-*, *zgl-* and *zgr-* (but note that *zC-* itself is a product of Latin-inherited words, e.g. *zbură* < *EXVOLARE ‘to fly’, *zgîria* < *SCABERARE ‘to scratch’).

3.4 Morphology and syntax

A number of features have been attributed to the influence of Slavonic:

- The form of the feminine vocative case: *Maria / Mario* ‘Mary’, *soră / soro* ‘sister’ (Latin did not distinguish a vocative in feminine nouns of the 1st declension, though it did have a 2nd declension masculine vocative, e.g. *DOMINUS / DOMINE*, which is also present in Romanian *domnul / domnule* — accordingly there has been a politically-charged debate as to whether the survival of the masculine vocative case is due to Slavonic influence or is a remnant of Latin).
- The ‘neuter’ gender of Romanian (note that this is in fact a ‘mixed’ gender, the nouns of which behave as masculines in the singular and feminines in the plural). This probably survived vestigially from Latin, since some of the characteristic neuter inflections of Latin also survive:

Lat. SCAMNU(M) > Rom. *scaun(ul)* Lat. SCAMNA > Rom. *scaune(le)*
 Lat. TEMPUS > Rom. *timp(ul)* Lat. TEMPORA > Rom. *timpuri(le)*

(Italian also has a similar inherited ‘neuter’, but it is such a small class of nouns that it is usually regarded as exceptional: Lat. OVU(M) > It. *uovo*, treated as masculine / Lat. OVA > It. *uova*, treated as feminine.) In Romanian, the class was extended by the assignment of many foreign borrowings to the neuter category, e.g. *zid / ziduri* ‘wall’ (and this continues with modern borrowings, e.g. *tren / trenuri*).

- Numerals (see lecture on Romance groupings)

3.5 The Balkan Union

A number of linguistic features seem to be shared between genealogically unrelated (or very distantly related) languages in the Balkans; these features are not shared by these languages with their closer genealogical relatives. This suggests the possibility of multiple contact and influence, a phenomenon known as a **LINGUISTIC UNION** or **SPRACHBUND**.

	Romanian	Albanian	Bulgarian	Macedonian	Greek
Development of a central vowel /ɐ/ or /ɨ/	YES	YES	YES		
Palatalisation of /s/ before [i]	YES	YES			
Merger of genitive and dative cases	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Postposing of article	YES	YES	YES	YES	
Avoidance of the infinitive	(YES)	(YES)	YES		YES

Clitic doubling	YES	YES	YES		YES
Enclitic possessives	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
‘Slavic’ numerals 11-19	YES	YES	YES	YES	

However, some of the features proposed by supporters of the *Sprachbund* hypothesis are explainable within the context of general developments within Romance: the periphrastic future tense, the analytic perfect formed with the verb ‘have’.

Further reading:

Mallinson, Graham, 1988. ‘Rumanian’, in Martin Harris & Nigel Vincent(eds), *The Romance Languages* (London: Croom Helm), pp. 391–419.

Wikipedia: article on the Balkan Union:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_linguistic_union.