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Minority languages in language contact situations: three case studies on language change.

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0. Introduction

This paper presents results of the research carried out within the European Research Project AThEME (http://www.atheme.eu)[1], that stands for "Advancing the European Multilingual Experience". One of the main questions and objectives that the project pursues is to investigate the possible effects of multilingualism on grammar changes in a situation of contact between regional and standard languages. Therefore this article presents three case studies each of which zooms in on a specific grammar change phenomenon in which multilingual competence plays a key role—cf. Abraham (2013), Sasse (1992) and Thomason (2001a-b).

In the last decades, regional varieties and minority (even endangered) languages have proven to be precious instruments for the observation of grammar change, which normally occurs faster and is somehow easier to be observed than in standard varieties (cf. Bidese et al. 2012; Abraham and Leiss 2013 and references cited there).

In this article three geographic areas featuring language contact in a multilingual context will be taken into account:

(i) Friesland as an example of contact between Standard Dutch and a language genealogically related to it, namely Frisian (see section 1).

(ii) the Region Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol as an example of contact between Germanic and Romance varieties with a particular focus on the Cimbrian minority (see section 2).

(iii) the Basque Country (the central variety of Basque, Guipuscoan), as an example of two genealogically unrelated languages (central varieties of Basque vs Spanish) – see section 3.

Even if the three different areas under investigation provide a manifold picture of contact situations, they are all comparable from a sociolinguistic viewpoint: all speakers of the different varieties are bi- or multilingual; moreover, they represent cases of multilingualism where local varieties face the pressure exerted by either a stronger standard (Dutch, Spanish/French, Italian) or other more prominent dialects (even of different language families).

As for the grammatical aspects that might constitute the possible core of the research on regional languages, they encompass – as one might expect – a wide range of different phenomena from phonology to syntax, from morphology to lexical semantics. However, in this paper we will restrict the phenomena under investigation to the syntactic level in order for the results to be more homogeneous and hence directly comparable. In particular, the three syntactic case studies under investigation in this paper involve phenomena in the realm of the clausal structure. Specifically, the paper will center around the following topics:

- Germanic-Germanic contact: ongoing changes in directional verbs in Frisian (*gean* 'go' and *bliuwe* 'stay'), which have taken on the typical features of functional verbs entering aspectual constructions, i.e. they imitate the behavior of their Dutch counterpart.

- Germanic-Romance contact: borrowing of a functional word in the Alpine area (complementizer borrowing in Cimbrian).

- Basque-Romance contact: attrition phenomena in the Spanish spoken in the Basque area. The syntax of Spanish wh-interrogatives seems to be affected by Basque in showing the same restrictions found in Basque.

Even though the three case studies focus on different domains of the clausal system – i.e. V-Aspectual in Frisian, the system of subordinating conjunctions in Cimbrian, the structure of interrogatives in Basque – it will become clear that, at a more abstract level, the nature of grammatical change in those domains displays some similarities, confirming that language contact does not result in the transfer of morphosyntactic structure but it rather affects the (more abstract)

system of functional features: this is basically what is proposed in this paper within a common syntactic framework based on an elaborate system of functional projections enhancing the basic C-T-(v+V) spine[2].

In section 1, which presents Frisian data, it will be shown that lexical elements already present in a language develop a propensity to take on more functional characteristics and end up being "semantically bleached", i.e. are used to convey a specific functional property (say a temporal/aspectual feature for a verb of movement): we take contact to be at work in this case. In fact, as will be presented in the section, this is the case when such a grammaticalization path has already occurred in the model language, the replica language simply reproducing the same behavior.

Section 2, devoted to the system of Cimbrian subordinating conjunctions, will focus on the behavior of a complementation system which has borrowed a new member from Romance giving an account as to how the features of this newly-introduced element are manipulated.

Finally, in section 3 it will be shown that, when it comes to possible word order patterns, language contact seems to push towards an overall reduction of the set of all possible word orders by simply favoring the pattern shared by the model language and the replica language rather than by introducing new ones: to put it in another way, language contact favors the discarding of alternative orders —especially the marked ones. As a matter of fact, Basque-Spanish bilinguals tend to restrict the options that Spanish monolinguals have in following the pattern possible in Basque.

0.1 Our view on contact

In the tradition of language contact studies, borrowings are known to be extended in their usage or – on the contrary – to appear in very restrictive contexts, lexically instantiating a specific position in the replica language. What is new in this article is the approach towards the very concept of language contact which is unanimously taken to play a role in grammatical change but in a way

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[2] The C-T-(v+V) system is simply a commonplace shorthand for the functional structure of the clause: 'C' stands for Complementizer, 'T' for Tense, small 'v' and capital 'V' both stand for the verbal layer consisting of its lexico-semantic (V) and functional features (v). The sequence C-T-(v+V) is said to be basic per se, since it is made of just four elements, but each atom can be split in an array of sub-features, i.e. those appertaining to the Complementizer which are normally fronted in the sentence (subordinating elements per se, interrogative elements, dislocated phrases, etc.); those appertaining to Tense (temporal features per se, aspectual and mood features, etc.) and so on. Theoretical approaches within the Generative-linguistic tradition differ as to how much structure is assumed to describe a sentence properly. Here, we are proposing a richer and more fine-grained make-up of the functional features of the sentence to make sense of all the data coming from the minority languages taken into account.

subtler than previously thought. Even in the process of lexical borrowing —especially when it comes to functional elements (e.g. complementizers)— one must be very cautious not to confuse the adoption of a piece of E-language with the adoption of the abstract features (or a pertinent subset thereof) appertaining to that item, which is rather an I-language phenomenon[3]. In other words, computational atoms (i.e. an abstract feature or a bundle of features) borrowed by another language are "less innocent" than they seem. In fact, it is the way in which formal features are manipulated in the bilingual mind that affects the very essence of syntactic objects. Basically, being bilingual means that two I-languages are in contact: this contact may be unbalanced i.e. there might be stronger competence in either language, as is often the case with minority languages. In any case, two grammatical systems in contact entail that one system affects the other in speeding up or maintaining ongoing change or even more in introducing feature characterizations coherent with the system which imports them. On the contrary, a system never accepts erratic features – i.e. incoherent with the system itself – and is never derailed from its internal direction of change.

1. Grammaticalization of directional *gean* ('go') to an aspectual item in Frisian

In this section, we will consider the change in the lexical nature and grammatical behavior of the Frisian verb *gean* ('go') and its relation to Dutch-Frisian language contact. *Gean* used to be a lexical element expressing motion, but is nowadays used as a functional item expressing prospective aspect in Frisian, while it also remains being used as a motion verb.

The term Frisian in this paper refers to the West-Frisian language variety that is spoken in Friesland, a province in the northern part of The Netherlands. Frisian is recognized as an official language in The Netherlands, but it is spoken in a very limited area of the The Netherlands and mostly used in informal settings. Similar to Dutch, Frisian is a West-Germanic language. Dutch and Frisian are actually very similar both in structure and vocabulary. There used to be a "stable diglossia" situation in Friesland (De Haan, 2010), in which Frisian was used for informal matters

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[3] The distinction between E(xternalized)-language and I(nternalized)-language was first proposed in Chomsky (1986): the former is taken to be the epiphenomenal aspect of language, i.e. actual languages or their "visible characteristics" whereas the latter represents the biologically specified mental object that abstracts away from idiosyncratic instantiations and represents the core properties of language itself. As regards language contact, it has been emphasized that comparing languages entails more delving into abstract syntactic operations relating to general principles of U(niversal)G(rammar) and to linguistic interfaces rather than comparing superficial characteristics in the lexicon and in constructions (see also Chomsky 2000).

and Dutch for formal matters. In the 20th century, however, this changed to a situation of "unstable bilingualism" (De Haan, 2010). Dutch is used more and more in the public life and at home. Dutch is the obligatory language of primary education in the Netherlands and all speakers of Frisian speak Dutch as well. This means there are no Frisian monolingual speakers anymore. Dutch is clearly the majority language nowadays and is influencing Frisian in many aspects. One example of this is the behavior of the Frisian verb *gean* ('go'), which seems to change from a lexical motion verb, as in (1b), to a functional item indicating the near future, as in (2b). This replicates the behavior of the Dutch verb *gaan* ('go') (see (1a) and (2a)). In both languages, the verb also remains being used as a verb of motion.

(1)	a.	Ik ga naar Amsterdam.	*Dutch*
	b.	Ik gean nei Amsterdam	*Frisian*
		I go to Amsterdam	

(2)	a.	Ik ga zwemmen.	*Dutch*
	b.	Ik gean swimmen.	**Former Frisian / ?√Frisian*
		I go swim	
		"I'm going to swim"	

1.1 The data

Data which is referred to in this section was collected by means of a digital, written questionnaire. a section. In this section, the participants were asked about their age, gender, education level, their education in Frisian, place of birth, place of residence, native languages, the language of their parents and their use of Dutch and Frisian on an average day. As a control, a Dutch version the same questionnaire was administered to a group of Dutch speakers (N=61), excluding the background questions which referred to Frisian.

1.2 Analysis

This section analyses the change in the Frisian *gean* as a case of contact-induced grammaticalization[4]. It shows that language contact has very clear but subtle influences; it targets an item which, because of its lexical features, was likely to grammaticalize, and it is, therefore, not the only cause of this change.

1.2.1 Grammaticalization

Grammaticalization is the process of change from a "more lexical" towards a "more functional" item. *Gean* in (1b) is a lexical motion verb, but in (2b), it is functional. The main verb is *swimme*, and *gean* has to be in a functional position, since the sentence is monoclausal[5], functional verbs not being endowed with theta-features and not being associated with a v/V structure. The question is then, in which functional position *gean* might be and whether this is similar to Dutch *gaan*. An obvious candidate for the position of *gean* would be T, or, assuming a richer clausal hierarchy like Cinque (1999), Future Tense. However, sentences like (3), with a stative verb as complement of *gean*, and (4), with a modal verb as complement of *gean*, are judged very poorly by native speakers in our questionnaire.

(3)   *Wy   gean   nije   wike   net   thús   wêze.

        We   go   next   week   not   at home   be

        "We will not be home next week."

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[4] The grammaticalization path and its decomposition in several implicational steps as a diachronic process within a single language has been well-known ever since Heine (2003) a.o. As we will see, in the specific case of language contact the trigger of grammaticalization is due to the transfer of functional features available in the model language. To what extent the process of borrowing in language contact mirrors the process of grammaticalization prompts an important research question to be addressed in future studies.

[5] In a mono-clausal structure, negation can only take scope over the whole sentence, not just one part of it (Erb, 2001). (i) does not have scopal ambiguity, as illustrated below, and is therefore monoclausal.

(i)   Sy   giet   net   swimmen.

        She   goes   not   swim

        "She is not going to swim"
        * "She is going to [not swim]."

(4) *Hy   giet   net   kieze kinnen tusken syn freonen.

H*e*   *goes*   *not*   *choose can*   *between his friends*

"He will not be able to choose between his friends."

If *gean* were a Future Tense item, there would be no reason why these sentences are ungrammatical; the counterparts with the future tense verb *sille* ('will') are grammatical. However, if *gean* is actually an aspectual item, this would explain the impossibility of (3) and (4). Since aspect deals with the internal temporal structure of events, it makes sense that they are hard to combine with stative verbs; verbs that lack internal temporal structure[6]. The inability for an aspectual item to embed a modal verb follows from the functional hierarchy by Cinque (1999), partly represented in (5), which shows that modal projections (Mod) are higher than aspectual projections (Asp).

(5) [Mood$_{speech\ act}$ [Mood$_{evaluative}$ [Mood$_{evidential}$ [Mod$_{epistemic}$ [T(Past) [T(Future)

[Mood$_{irrealis}$ [Mod$_{necessity}$ [Mod$_{possibility}$ [Mod$_{volitional}$ [Mod$_{obligation}$

[Mod$_{ability/permission}$ [Asp$_{habitual}$ [Asp$_{repetitive(I)}$ [Asp$_{frequentative}$ [Asp$_{celerative(I)}$

[T(Anterior) [Asp$_{terminative}$ [Asp$_{continuative}$ [Asp$_{perfect}$ [Asp$_{retrospective}$ [Asp$_{proximative}$

[Asp$_{durative}$ [Asp$_{generic/progressive}$ [Asp$_{prospective}$ [Asp$_{SgCompletive(I)}$ [Asp$_{PlCompletive}$

[Voice [Asp$_{celerative(II)}$ [Asp$_{SgCompletive(II)}$ [Asp$_{repetitive(II)}$ [Asp$_{frequentative(II)}$ ..

Selectional restrictions thus suggest that *gean* is in an aspectual head. We propose that *gean* expresses prospective aspect, i.e. it is lexicalized in the Asp$_{prospective}$ projection. This corresponds to the meaning that functional *gean* expresses: a precedence relation between the utterance time and the event (in other words, the utterance refers to a moment before the event actually started). Interest-

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[6] Stative verbs in Frisian can, for example, also not be put in a progressive aspect context:

(ii) *Ik bin thús   oan   it   wêzen
       I am   at home at   the   be
       "I am being at home"

ingly, this corresponds exactly to the behavior of the Dutch *gaan*: the Dutch counterparts of (3) and (4) were also judged poorly, and *gaan* is therefore assumed to be an aspectual item in Dutch as well.

As stated a bove, prospective aspect expresses a relation of precedence (assertion time before event time) (Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria, 1998). A relation of precedence between two things (X before Y) can be both spatial or temporal. In its motion verb use, as in (1b), *gean* actually expresses precedence as well: the subject is before (moving towards) the goal in space. According to Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria (1998), this is the same kind of precedence relation as temporal or aspectual precedence: they all have the features [–central coincidence] and [+centripetal coincidence][7]. Because *gean* is a very general, "empty" motion verb (it does not specify manner or direction, for example) We The proposal of this paper is that the item *gean* contains only these precedence features and can therefore express precedence both in space and in time.

Grammaticalization is the process of becoming more functional, and can therefore be seen as moving upwards in the functional structure (IJbema, 2001). This is what happened to *gean*: besides being a lexical verb, it can, in present-day Frisian (of many speakers) also be inserted in a higher, functional position in the structure: *prospective aspect*. Although we speak of grammaticalization of *gean*, and therefore a change in *gean*, actually the features of the verb itself do not change. *Prospective aspect* was not explicitly expressed in Frisian before, but now it lexicalized, and this is done so by means of *gean*, because *gean* is very well fitted for this role: its precedence features already match the features of *aspect prospective*.

One aspect that should be noted here, is that *gean* has had the possibility of selecting a bare infinitive for a longer time, but only with a limited set of verbs: the posture verb *lizze* (to lie), *sitte* (to sit), *stean* (to stand) and *hingje* (to hang). However, in these constructions, there is always a sense of motion, so *gean* is not yet an aspectual verb here. Nevertheless, having these constructions in the input might have lead acquirers to hypothesize that selecting a bare infinitve could be one of *gean*'s selectional properties.

1.1.3 Language contact and other factors

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[7] These features refer to the position of a Figure with respect to the Ground (Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria, 1998). [–central coincidence] means that Figure and Ground are not at the same place or time. [+centripetal coincidence] means that the Figure precedes the Ground (centripetal means "towards center").

As shown in (1a) and (2a), the Dutch verb *gaan* patterns similar to the Frisian *gean*: it has both a motion use and a functional use. It also shows the same limitations as in (3) and (4), showing that it is an aspectual item rather than a future tense item. The difference is that in Dutch, this is not a recent change, the pattern has been accepted for a long time. A natural assumption to make is then that Frisian *gean* changed because of contact with Dutch. However, this has never really been proven. Since *go* grammaticalizes in so many languages (Bybee et al., 1994), and the West-Germanic languages closely related to Frisian (Dutch, Flemish, English, German to some extent) have undergone the same change, it could also be the case that this is an internal change. We propose, however, that language contact with Dutch indeed plays a role. We find a clear indication for this in the results of our questionnaire. It turned out that there is a small but significant correlation between the amount of Dutch spoken on an average day and ratings on the items with *gean* as a functional item ($r = .267$, $p = .013$) . In other words, people who speak more Dutch, are more accepting of the new use of *gean*. A second indication that contact with Dutch plays a role in the change of *gean* is the fact that the change already happened in contact dialects (dialects that emerged from a lot of contact between Dutch in Frisian), such as Town Frisian (van Bree & Versloot, 2008) and West-Frisian (Hoekstra, 1994).

At first glance, the change might seem like a fairly superficial borrowing process, since it involved just one word. However, it is not the case that a new word has been borrowed, but the behavior of an item that was already present in Frisian has changed. The change in Frisian can therefore be seen as a process of "replica grammaticalization", as described by Heine & Kuteva (2003: 539). However, grammaticalization is not a process happening within one speaker, it is something gradual we observe on a population level: *gean* is used more and more in a functional way. On the individual level of a Frisian acquirer, it is one setting of an I-language grammar: the lexicalization of prospective aspect (by *gean)*. This speaker therefore uses *gean* as an aspectual item. When a lot of speakers acquire the I-language with this setting, which is different from the I-language of previous generations, their output will be different from previous generations, and a change can be observed in the E-language, the Frisian language of the population.

In short, although the change might seem like an E-language change, the ways in which the change could happen was constrained by the linguistic system (the possibility of a *prospective aspect* category and the features of *gean*). Moreover, we found that language contact played a role in actually initiating the change.

1.1.4 *Bliuwe*

A similar case of replica grammaticalization happened with the Frisian verb *bliuwe*; it grammaticalized from a lexical verb expressing lack of motion (6b) to a functional item expressing durative aspect as in (7b). It patterns exactly like the Dutch verb *blijven* (6a & 7a).

(6)	a.	Ik blijf in Amsterdam.	*Dutch*
	b.	Ik bliuw yn Amsterdam	*Frisian*
		I stay in Amsterdam	

(7)	a.	Ik blijf zwemmen.	*Dutch*
	b.	Ik bliuw swimmen.	**Former Frisian / ?√Frisian*
		I stay swim	
		'*I keep swimming*'	

Similar to *gean*, *bliuwe* was an item sensitive to change anyway; its [+coincidence] feature matches both with the use in (6b) ('X stays at location Y') and with (7b) ('X stays at event Y'). The category durative aspect, i.e. the ASP$_{durative}$ projection, can now be lexicalized in Frisian, boosted by Dutch influence, and enabled by the features of *bliuwe*.

1.3 Preliminary conclusion

In short, language contact with Dutch has influenced the changes in Frisian, but in very subtle ways: the changes occurred in items which did not have much lexical content and were therefore the most likely candidates for change. In this case, those items were *gean* and *bliuwe*, verbs that have little semantic content except for the [±coincidence] features that are relevant for both space and time. This made them likely candidates for change, which can also be noted from the fact that these verbs grammaticalize in many other languages, too. Although language contact is therefore not the only relevant factor, it plays an important role in initiating the change. The change is also more subtle than one might think. It is not just the borrowing of an E-language item; the limitations of *gean* clearly show that it fits into the category of *prospective aspect*, a functional category that has now become lexicalized in Frisian: an I-language change.

To sum up: even if there is no actual borrowing of lexical items – as these verb forms are already there in the replica language – the categorical features that they are made of go through a restructuring path: the motion verb begins instantiating an aspectual auxiliary.

2. Complementizer borrowing in Cimbrian: data from a Northern-Italian language island

Borrowing is a common phenomenon in contact situations (cf. Matras 2013 and Winford 2013 a.o.): the process of borrowing of lexical items in a replica language is continuous, especially if the pressure exerted by the model language is strong enough. When it comes to the borrowing of functional words, though, there is no general consensus as to whether they maintain the set of the formal features (or a subset thereof) they are endowed with in the model language. Anyway, there is strong typological evidence that functional words like complementizers are borrowed, in which case a partial "readjusting" of the complementation system of the language is likely to occur (see also Bayer 1999 and Tánczos 2013).

For our concerns here, we take into account the double system of complementizers found in a Germanic minority language, Cimbrian, which is spoken in the area between the Regions Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol and Veneto. Cimbrian belongs to the group of Southern Bavarian-Austrian dialects from which it has been isolated since the 11th Century (cf. Bidese 2004) preserving some morpho(phono)logical features it has in common with its medieval cognates (cf. among others Bidese 2010 ed.). Nowadays, the three major varieties of Cimbrian are spoken in Luserna/Lusérn in the Province of Trento; in the so-called area of the Tredici Comuni (lit. "Thirteen Municipalities") in the Province of Verona (where Cimbrian is spoken in the village of Giazza/Ljetzan only); in the so-called area of the Sette Comuni (lit. "Seven Municipalities") close to Asiago/Schlege in the Province of Vicenza (where only few speakers of Cimbrian are found in the village of Roana/ Robaan). However, the only variety in which a certain degree of competence is found among younger speakers is the one spoken in Luserna. In this small village in the Trentino Region there are 300 inhabitants: they are all taken to be speakers of Cimbrian (de facto about ¾ of them, so ca. 230). Their fluency is not homogeneous since fluent-speakerness and semi-speakerness are intermingled ("semi-speaker" in Dorian's 1981 sense). The other villages in the Veneto Region have less than 10 speakers each, all with different degrees of competence.

In this dialect the Romance complementizer *ke* (Italian *che*) has been used for at least a century (at least, this is what turns up in the most ancient written texts we have, namely the "Tales of Lusern" gathered in 1905 by Josef Bacher) but it might have been present even earlier.

The native complementizer of Cimbrian is *az*; it introduces either declarative clauses or embedded polar question, thus it can both mean 'that' and 'whether'. It is typically selected by non-factive verbs and often occurs with embedded subjunctive. Its selection is related to word order asymmetry: in fact, *az*-introduced sentences show the typical root vs embedded word order asymmetry i.e. in the embedded order the finite verb (henceforth V_{fin}) obligatorily follows sentential negation and other sentential adverbials. Moreover, *az* can host phonologically weak elements like clitic pronouns and the expletive subject *-da* (cf. Kolmer 2005 and Bidese; Padovan & Tomaselli 2012) forming compound words such as *az-to*, 'that-you', *azz-ar*, 'that-he', *az-ta*, 'that-there' and so on.

On the other hand, the complementizer *ke* shows up in both declarative and non-restrictive relative contexts; it behaves more like a generalized "subordinator" rather than a full-fledged clause-typer as is the case of *az*. In fact, *ke* does not affect word order in subordinate clauses: in other words, it neutralizes the asymmetry main vs embedded extending the root word order pattern to embedded clauses: in *ke*-introduced clauses the V_{fin} precedes both Neg and sentential adverbials and subject-verb inversion is possible in the same fashion as in root clauses. *Ke* can host neither clitic pronouns nor the expletive *-da* (cf. Kolmer 2005 and Bidese; Padovan & Tomaselli 2012) and has to be followed by tonic pronouns like in *ke du* (*ke-to) 'that you', *ke er/dar* (*ke-ar) 'that he' and so on.

| (8) | a. | I bill **az***ar nèt* gea ka Roma | (**az** *Pron*_{Clit} *Neg* V_{fin}) |

(8)   a.   I bill **az***ar nèt* gea ka Roma   (**az** *Pron*$_{Clit}$ *Neg* V_{fin})

           I want that=he not go$_{sub}$ to Rome

           I do not want him to go to R.

   b.   Di Maria khött **ke** *er* geat *nèt* ka Roma   (**ke** *Pron* V_{fin} *Neg*)

           The Maria says that he goes not to Rome

           Maria says that he does not go to R.

(9)   a.   Di Maria khött **ke** geischtar izz=*ar* rivart

           The Maria says that yesterday is.he arrived

           Maria says that yesterday he arrived

   b.   dar Mario, **ke** z'iz a guatz mentsch, khinnt pitt üs

           the M. who it is a good person comes with us

           Mario, who is a nice guy, is coming with us

2.1 Analysis

In recent work (Grewendorf & Poletto 2011; Padovan 2011; Kolmer 2012) it has been put forward that *az* and *ke* differ in their syntactic behavior since they are merged as different C heads in a split-C scenario. A low position and a high position must be distinguished: this is due to the fact that the major functional categories of the clause are not monolithic but can be broken down in specialized sub-categories, as we hinted at in the introduction.[8] Recall that *az* can be related to embedded Mood (subjunctive) and its presence forces the finite verb to occur lower (possibly in v/V). In other words, assuming that V2 sentences feature the finite V moving to Fin^0 it is reasonable to assume that *az* occurs in complementary distribution with the finite verb since it competes for the same position. Thus, *az* heads FinP blocking V-to-C(/Fin) movement.

(10)   a. [$_{SubordP}$ [$_{ForceP}$ [… [$_{FinP}$ ***az-cl*** [$_{TP}$ … *mood/V$_{fin}$*]]]]]

       b. [$_{SubordP}$ ***ke*** [$_{ForceP}$ [… [$_{FinP}$ V$_{fin}$ [$_{TP}$ … ~~V$_{fin}$~~]]]]]

As regards the abstract features of these items, it would be quite tempting to assume *prima facie* that a functional element like *ke* maintains the formal features with which it is endowed in Italian: for instance, one might expect no difference between main and embedded clause, as is the case in Italian, and in fact this is borne out. However, this similarity is only apparent: in fact, Cimbrian main clauses feature v/V-to-C movement, whereas their Italian counterparts don't. What is the treatment of a functional word in the replica language? What is it merged with?

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[8] Ever since the seminal work by Rizzi (1997) concerning the left periphery of the clause, the categorial features of the Complementizer per se have been taken to instantiate dedicated projections which host the functional categories normally associated with C, namely subordinating conjunctions and interrogative phrases but also left-dislocated constituents like topicalized or focalized XPs. In particular, the Force Phrase – the topmost C projection – encodes the illocutionary force of the clause and is assumed to be the merging position of "high" complementizers (like Italian *che,* 'that'); the Fin(iteness) Phrase – the bottommost C projection – represents the boundary between C and Tense and controls tense and mood features of the embedded verb, moreover, it can also be a merging position for complementizers (the "low" ones, such as the Italian infinitival complementizer *di,* 'to'). Complementizers can therefore be found in at least two different positions of the the C-layer or the left periphery of the clause. However, there are languages that do not conflate subordinating and clause typing: in fact, it can also be the case that a generalized subordinating element precedes the "real" complementizer simply indicating the "beginning" of a non-matrix clause: Bhatt & Yoon (1992) first proposed the presence of a Subordinator Phrase which has to be kept distinct from the C head (in contemporary terms, both Force and Fin). Assuming such a position allows us to explain several embedded root phenomena, such as embedded V2 (see also Julien 2008 for embedded V2 in Scandinavian).

Assuming a split-CP scenario, it is quite reasonable to take a borrowed complementizer like *ke* to enter the Cimbrian complementation system being merged in the topmost C layer (the so-called "Subordinator Phrase" in Bhatt & Yoon's 1992 terms) leaving the bottommost layer, i.e. Fin, free for verb movement to take place.

Going back to the parallel Italian *che* vs Cimbrian *ke*, we want to emphasize that even if they both introduce a "symmetric system" where matrix clause and subordinate clause feature the same word order, there remains a subtle, yet crucial, difference between Cimbrian and Italian since *ke* does not introduce exactly the *same* symmetry found in Italian: in other words, the system is symmetrical (as in the model language) but in its own way.

2.2 *The unexpected pattern ke + subjunctive*

In the previous section we have pointed out that *az* is connected with embedded mood, which is expected in a framework where Fin checks for mood downstairs. Recall that *az* can also cooccur with indicative; what is not expected in this system is the cooccurrence of *ke* and subjunctive mood.

Let's start by observing that in Italian the factive/non-factive status of the matrix verb is relevant for complementizer selection (cf. Manzini 2000 and Hooper & Thompson 1973 a.o.) whereas in Cimbrian it is the mood of the embedded clause that ultimately affects complementizer selection. Non-factive verbs such as *gloam*, 'think/believe' select for both *az* and *ke*; on the contrary, other non-factive verbs like *khün* 'say' only select for *ke* (cf. Bidese et al. 2014) as shown in (11-12):

(11) a. Sa gloam **az**zar *sai* gerift spet

      They think that=he be$_{sub}$ arrived late

      'They think that he arrived late'

    b. Sa gloam **ke** dar *iz* gerift spet

      They think that he is arrived late

      'They think that he arrived late'

(12) a. Dar Mario khütt **ke** dar Bèppe *iz* gånt kan(n) birt

      The M. says that the B. is gone to the pub

      'M. says that B. went to the pub'

    b. *Dar Mario khütt **az**ta dar Beppe *sai* gånt kan(n) birt

The M. says that.da the B. is_{sub} gone to the pub

'M. says that B. went to the pub'

If the system were limited to just [*ke*+IND/*SUB] and [*az*+IND/SUB] we could invoke a relatively simple scenario: *az*, heading Fin, acts as a probe checking the mood feature of embedded T; on the contrary, *ke* is not expected to do so since it is "blind" to embedded mood.

However, if it turned out that *ke* can actually occur with subjunctive[9] the assumption we have made so far would be problematic, then *ke*, being merged in SubordP, does not possess features compatible with mood selection.

As a matter of fact, subjunctive turns up in *ke*-introduced sentences: in particular, in the translation tasks administered to our (bilingual) informants the mood of the Italian stimulus sentence seems to play a key role in affecting mood selection in Cimbrian translations and hence in triggering the presence of an "unexpected" subjunctive (13 and 14b).

(13)   'Z iz nèt khött **ke** dar Gianni *khemm* pit üs   (*ke* + **sub**)

It is not said that the G. come_{sub} with us

Stimulus sentence: "Non è detto che il Gianni *venga* con noi"

('we are not sure that G. comes with us')

(14)   a.   I gloabe **ke** dar Gianni *iz* sa gerift ka Tria   (*ke* + ind)

I think that the G. is already arrived in T.

Stimulus sentence: "Credo che Gianni *sia/è* già arrivato (a Trento)"

('I think that G. is_{IND} already arrived in T.')

b.   I gloabe **ke** dar Gianni *sai* sa gerift ka Tria   (*ke* + **sub**)

I think that the G. be_{SUB} already arrived in T.

Stimulus sentence: "Credo che Gianni *sia* già arrivato (a Trento)"

('I think that G. be_{SUB} already arrived in T.')

_____

[9] The data presented here were gathered in several fieldwork sessions in Luserna: groups of fluent speakers (up to six) were administered translations task from Italian into Cimbrian (ca. 60 sentences with distractors and other syntactic phenomena). Informants are divided according to age.
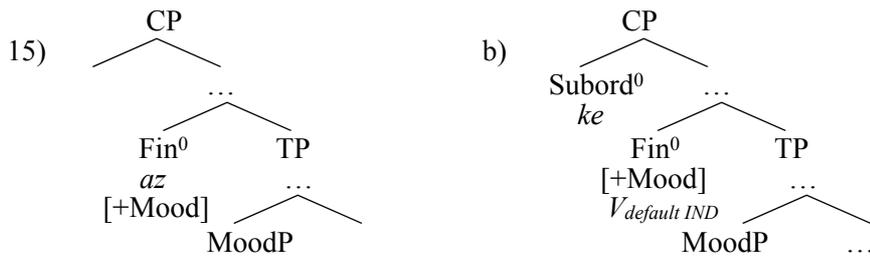
Table 1. The distribution of subjunctive and indicative

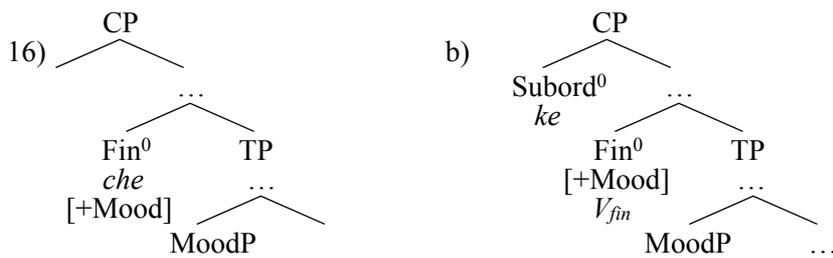| Italian stimulus 'che+SUB'	Cimbrian translation	
credo che tu… 'I think that you…'	i gloabe azto+SUB	i gloabe ke du+IND
credo che lui… 'I think that he…'	i gloabe azzar+SUB	i gloabe ke er+IND
credo che noi… 'I think that we…'	*i gloabe azpar+SUB	i gloabe ke biar+IND
credo che voi… 'I think that you$_{PL}$…'	i gloabe azzar+SUB	i gloabe ke dar+IND
credo che loro… 'I think that they…'	i gloabe azze+SUB	i gloabe ke sa+IND

To account for [*ke*+SUB] it is reasonable to assume a system made of two grammars coexisting in the bilingual mind: the mood system in Cimbrian becomes more and more parasitic on the mood system in the model language, Italian, mood features infiltrating the complementation system of the replica language through what could be dubbed "weak points" of the structure (see table 1), i.e. points where morphological ambiguity (such as indicative vs subjunctive) might favor an unmarked option: on the one hand the unmarked option initially favors the spreading of indicative as default mood in the whole paradigm, on the other hand it also affects the abstract features of *ke*, which ends up taking on the role of *az* in selecting the subjunctive (the marked option).

To sum up, we put forward a three-step contact-induced change in mood selection:

1. the topmost left periphery hosts elements (mostly) endowed with a minimum of formal features (discourse-related particles, adverbials, conjunctions)

2. in language contact, what is less marked (e.g. indicative vs subjunctive) is likely to be assigned a default value, 1st p.pl. SUB changes into 1st p.pl. IND: this accounts for the second step, i.e. the use of *ke*+IND with non-factives verbs

3. the third step consists in the accessibility to the lower C-layer (due to pressure of the model); there has to be an Agree relation between Fin and T (Mood$_{Irrealis}$): differently from Italian, Fin^0 does not host an overt complementizer but V$_{fin}$ instead.

15)

```
        CP
       /  \
          ...
         /   \
      Fin⁰    TP
       az     /\
     [+Mood]  ...
            /   \
          MoodP
```

b)

```
          CP
         /  \
    Subord⁰  ...
       ke   /   \
          Fin⁰    TP
        [+Mood]   /\
       V_default IND  ...
                /   \
              MoodP   ...
```

Cimbrian complementizer system

16)

```
        CP
       /  \
          ...
         /   \
      Fin⁰    TP
      che     /\
    [+Mood]  ...
            /   \
          MoodP
```

b)

```
          CP
         /  \
    Subord⁰  ...
       ke   /   \
          Fin⁰    TP
        [+Mood]   /\
         V_fin    ...
                /   \
              MoodP   ...
```

Feature transfer from Italian to Cimbrian

2.3 Preliminary conclusion

As our data confirm, syntactic interference per se in language contact does not obtain: this is in line with e.g. Abraham (2012). Nevertheless it is possible to agree on some preliminary starting points.

In the same fashion as lexical words, functional words are also inserted in their "bare" form into the replica language, discarding their original feature array; however, differently from lexical words they do not assume —at least initially— the morphosyntactic feature characterization of the replica language (*ke* does not compete with *az* for the same position and feature characterization but instantiates a higher position not endowed with mood features).

On the syntactic level just single abstract features enter the target language ([mood], etc.). We want to emphasize in particular the fact that abstract features (i.e. pieces of I-language) can enter alone the replica language and do not need a lexical item to "hold on to".

3. Syntactic transfer in Basque-Spanish bilingual speakers: interrogative structures

In many languages, constituent questions are characterized by the fronting of the wh-phrase into clause-initial position, often accompanied by locating the verbal complex in the second position. This is especially true of languages with basic SVO and VSO order. In contrast, SOV languages generally locate the wh-constituent in-situ, i.e. in the position of the constituents for which they substitute (Ultan, 1978 ; Siemund 2001: 1020). In peninsular Spanish, generally classified as SVO language, constituent questions normally exhibit wh-fronting and the direct adjacency of the wh-phrase and the verb is even obligatory. That is, nothing is allowed to occur between the two constituents, except some few adverbs like *jamás* 'never', *todavía* 'still' (Bosque & Gutiérrez-Rexach 2011: 449) or Polarity (negation). Interestingly, Basque, an SOV language and typologically very different to Spanish, also displays wh-fronting combined with obligatory adjacency of the wh-phrase and the verb (Hualde & Urbina 2003: 495-; Aldai 2011). (17) and (18) demonstrate the phenomenon for Spanish and Basque, respectively.

(17) a. ¿Qué compra Pedro?

    'What does Peter buy?'

  b. * ¿Qué Pedro compra?

(18) a. Zer erosten du Pedrok ?

    'What does Peter buy?'

  b. * Zer Pellok erosten du?

Since the influential work by Torrego (1984) and others, it has become clear that Spanish shows some exceptions regarding the obligatory adjacency of the wh-phrase and finite verb. It is generally assumed that in clauses with non-argumental wh-phrases, especially *por qué* 'why', adjacency is optional and not obligatory (see Uriagereka a.o. 1988). According to Rizzi (2001), this is explained by the assumption that a wh-phrase like *por qué* 'why' is generated in a higher position than argumental wh-phrases in an extended CP layer. This accounts for why in (19) the subject *Juan* can surface before or after the verbal complex (Torrego 1984):

(19)   ¿Por qué Juan quiere salir (Juan) antes de los demas?

       'Why does Juan wants to leave before the rest?'

However, Ordoñez (1998), Zubizarreta (2012) and others claim that the decisive factor for obligatory adjacency is not so much the argumental vs. non-argumental status of the wh-word, but the complexity of the wh-phrase. That is, complex or heavy wh-phrases seem to allow non-adjacency more readily than simple ones, as shown in (20) (Ordoñez 1998):

(20)   ¿A cuál de las chicas que han venido tu hermana había visto antes?

           'Which of the girls who came earlier had your sister seen?'

Note that these sentences seem to allow elements other than the subject to surface between the complex wh-phrase and the verb like a direct/indirect object or other constituents (Ordoñez 1998). A comparison with another leftward movement in Spanish, namely Clitic-Left-Dislocation (CLLD), reveals some interesting parallels. Normally, CLLD differs from wh-movement in some crucial characteristics (i.a. clitic-doubling (CLD) or multiple CLLD). Nevertheless, following Ordoñez (1998), it seems that heavy wh-phrases behave in some aspects like a CLLDed constituent. First, for a sentence like (20), adding a doubling clitic does not render the sentence ungrammatical, as shown in (21).

(21)¿A cuál de las chicas que han venido tu hermana la había visto antes?

    'Which of the girls who came earlier had your sister seen?'

Second, there is a parallel structure between left-dislocated complex negative quantifiers and complex wh-phrases. As a consequence, Ordoñez (1998: 347) claims that complex wh-phrases in Spanish "are not in SpecCP but are left dislocated", which would explain why adjacency is not obligatory between these kinds of wh-phrases and the verb. Hence, these sentences resemble the formerly described wh-sentences with *por qué* 'why'.

The case of Basque is different. Basque generally displays strict wh-fronting and obligatory adjacency (see (18)) with all wh-words except *zergatik* 'why' and *nolatan* 'how/how come', where, as in Spanish, direct adjacency is not obligatory (Hualde & Urbina 2003: 465):

(22)   Zergatik Jonek gainerakoak baino lehenago atera nahi du?

           'Why does John want to leave before the others?'

The main difference to Spanish lies in clauses with heavy wh-phrases. Basque always demands direct adjacency, no matter the length of the wh-phrase as shown in (23).

(23) Neska horietako zein (*zure arrebak) bisitatu zuen lehenago?

'Which of these girls had your sister visited before?'

In the context of an ongoing phd thesis, Simon Dold (IKER UMR5478-University of Konstanz) investigates the relative acceptance of non-adjacency of the wh-phrase and the verb in Spanish by bilingual Basque-Spanish speakers as compared to monolingual Spanish speakers. A first pretest (Dold 2015) yields empirical data suggesting that the former group judges sentences with an intervening constituent as less grammatical than the latter one. The pretest was based on acceptance tests realized among 10 bilingual speakers and an equal number of Spanish monolinguals, both from within the Basque Country and from other areas of Spain. The ongoing study follows L2 acquisition methodologies (see e.g. Montrul, 2008:18; Meisel, 2011) to classify the speakers into four different groups. The preliminary results suggest that age and sequence of acquisition play a crucial role in the acceptability of monolingual Spanish word order configurations. Simultaneous (2L1) and early Basque-Spanish bilinguals differ significantly from the other bilingual as well as monolingual speakers. The former group seems to be more restrictive than the latter in the sense that they rate wh-sentences without direct adjacency in general as less grammatical. An obvious exception are clauses with *por qué* 'why', which do not observe such a difference between groups. This is not surprising as this is the same context where adjacency between the wh-word and the verbal complex is not required in Basque.

The working hypothesis, supported by preliminary data, is that the different ratings can be explained by the influence of Basque grammar in the bilingual mind. As a reminder, in Basque, heavy wh-phrases behave identically as simple ones. In a split CP approach (cf. Rizzi 2001), they are moved to SpecFinP first and later to SpecFocP. Their Spanish counterparts, however, which are supposed to be left dislocated, are assumed to move to a higher position. Following a proposal by Rizzi (2001), we entertain the hypothesis that the wh-phrase in Spanish targets a dedicated wh-position higher than Fin. In other words, the main difference between the Spanish wh-question strategy and the Basque one, would be that in the Basque case, the wh-phrase targets the focus projection, whereas in Spanish the wh-phrase targets both the focus position and a higher Wh-projection. This is in line with what we know about the parallel behavior of focus fronting and wh-fronting in Basque (see Etxepare and Ortiz de Urbina, 2003). This higher Wh-position allows the intervention of topical phrases between the Wh-phrase and the finite verb. The parameter involved in this difference is ultimately a parameter concerning the lexicalization of the relevant features involved in wh-que-

stions : as recent works have made manifest (Hagstrom, 1998 ; Cable, 2007 ; Slade, 2011), wh-questions manipulate three basic elements. On the one hand, there's a special C-feature which introduces a set of propositions, a Q particle which maps into a choice function (an existential quantifier over a restricted set of alternatives), and a wh-indefinite which denotes a set and restricts the range of the quantification to the features expressed in the indefinite. Some languages, as is the case for Tlingit (as explored by Cable, 2007) or Japanese (Hagstrom, 1998), have independent exponents for the wh-indefinite and the Q-particle. The mutual syntactic independence of those two features makes certain configurations possible. Among other things it allows the Q-particle to target the C position independently, without the wh-phrase being pied-piped. This possibility is not allowed for Spanish, where the wh-indefinite and the existential quantifier (the Q-particle) are lexicalized together. Assuming that a wh-phrase must target at least two positions, a focal position (particularly clear for languages like Basque in which the syntax of wh-questions and of focus operators is basically identical) and another one, a higher C-related position encoding the question feature, the different lexicalization options represented by the two languages have an effect in the available derivations and their resulting configurations. Wh-phrases in Spanish are attracted to a higher position than Basque wh-phrases, as they are attracted to the ultimate position of the Q-feature itself. In Basque the Q-feature (null in this language but visible in Japanese, Tlingit and other languages) can target C without the wh-indefinite. The wh-indefinite only targets the focus position, which is adjacent to the verbal complex. We represent the two options as follows (23a corresponds to Basque ; 23b to Spanish, copies in italics) :

(23) a. $[_{CP}$ Q C^0 $[_{FocP}$ [Wh-Ind] Foc^0 $[_{IP}$ …$[_{WhP}$ Q $[_{WhP}$ $Wh\text{-}ind]]$...]]]

   b. $[_{CP}$ $[_{QP}$ Q $[_{WhP}$ Wh-ind]] C^0 $[_{FocP}$ $[_{QP}$ Q $[_{WhP}$ $Wh\text{-}ind]]$ Foc^0 $[_{IP}$ …$[_{QP}$ Q $[_{WhP}$ $Wh\text{-}ind]]$ …]]]

In (23b) the Q particle and the wh-indefinite are bound together, as a projection of Q, and they target the position corresponding to Q in the left periphery. In Basque, as in other languages which build their interrogative forms on the basis of so-called indeterminate pronouns (Kuroda, 1969 ; Haspelmath, 1997), the Q-particle is adjoined to the wh-indefinite, and it is not spelled out with it. Basically, there's a lexical parameter in the merging of the Q-particle and the wh-indefinite. In Spanish

the two features are merged together (a case of Set-Merge); in Basque, they are adjoined (a case of Pair-Merge)[10]. We gloss over that detail, sticking to the more traditional « adjunction » operation :

(24)   a. $[_{QP}$ Q $[_{WhP}$ Wh-ind$]]$ (Spanish)

             b. $[_{WhP}$ Q $[_{WhP}$ Wh-ind$]]$ (Basque)

Now, what happens with the bilingual speakers that differ in the acceptance of wh-questions in Spanish in which the wh-phrase is not adjacent to the finite verb ? The working hypothesis of the ongoing dissertation is that speakers of the first group (early bilinguals) treat wh-phrases in Spanish in the same way as they would in Basque. This explains their reservation about clauses without direct adjacency, since there is no position for the insertion of constituents between the wh-phrase and the finite verb, located in Fin in Basque. On the other hand, the general acceptance of intervening constituents in clauses with *porqué* 'why' is explained by the fact that the wh-phrase expressing 'why' is assumed to be base-generated in both languages in a higher position than SpecFinP or SpecFocP (Rizzi 2001). In our terms, this means that in that case the Q-particle and the wh-indefinite must have been spelled out together. This may seem like an ad hoc hypothesis, but the truth is that *zergatik* « why », unlike the other wh-phrases, is independently used as a C-element in Basque in the context of causal subordination in the central dialects which have been examined in this study :

(25) a.   **Zergatik** egin duzu hori?

          'Why did you do that ?'

      b.   **Zergatik** bai

          Why   yes

          'For no specific reason' (Lit. 'Because yes')

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[10] In recent minimalist literature 'Set Merge' and 'Pair Merge' are two technical concepts relating to the broader concept of Merge. Set and Pair Merge were first proposed in Chomsky 2004 to capture in particular argument-adjunct asymmetries: Set Merge takes two syntactic objects yielding an unordered set {α, β} which is symmetrical and binary whereas Pair Merge yields ordered pairs <α, β> which are by definition asymmetrical. Moreover, the two options may be distinguished by the presence versus absence of labelling (see Hornstein, 2009).

b'   **Zergatik** presaka nabil eta joan beharra nuen

       'Because I was in a hurry and I had to leave'

In any case, we know from cross-linguistic comparison, that *why*-questions are special (Tsai, 1994; Shlonsky and Soare, 2011 ; Blochowiak, 2014).

3.1 Preliminary conclusions

The correspondence between the sequencing and age of the acquisition of Spanish and the differential acceptance rates regarding those configurations in which the wh-word and the verb are not adjacent should be taken with the necessary caution, as the pretest involves a small population, statistically insufficient to draw any categorical conclusion. If the facts are confirmed by testing on a larger population, they may suggest a clear case of systemic syntactic transfer in bilingual first language acquisition, as has been observed in other cases (for a particularly relevant one, see Yip and Matthews, for Cantonese-English bilinguals, 2007).   Unlike other cases, in which a shift in language dominance may seem to reverse the early transfer (but see Meisel, 2011 for a critical assessment of this idea), the Basque-Spanish case would look like a successful transfer, maintained during the linguistic life of the tested speakers as part of their syntactic competence. Basque data seem to point to the convergence of and the maintaining of the structures that are shared by the two languages: what is not present in both languages (marked options) is discarded to the point that it is not acquired.

4. General Conclusions

In this article we have seen that contact phenomena manifest themselves in ways that appear superficially quite different, at a first sight. However, if one abstracts away from superficial differences one can easily recognize a common pattern: language contact can be basically thought of as two abstract feature systems (i.e. I-languages) in contact inside the bilingual mind. The contact between the two systems manifests itself in either favoring the transfer of specific features or promoting a

pattern shared by the two languages.[11] In general, a formal feature belonging to the model language does not replace a feature of the target language, but just "fills a gap" in that system; in a similar way, no new word order pattern is added to the existing ones, but the system capitalizes on the shared one disfavoring the ones that are language-specific. The former case is represented by Frisian and Cimbrian, where the formal features of functional verbs and complementizers respectively, are transferred from the model languages (Standard Dutch and Romance) to the replica languages (Frisian and Cimbrian); the latter case is represented by the contact Basque-Spanish which favors influence in the opposite direction, from replica to model language: this does not come as a surprise if one assumes contact/attrition phenomena not to widen the possible set of word order patterns but, again, to restrict them discarding the ones that are not shared by the two languages.

To sum up, if on the one hand contact at the syntactic level never implies "substitution of pieces" (either single features or specific word order patterns) on the other hand it seems to affect the speed of an otherwise expected diachronic development. In all three cases taken into account in this article, contact contributes to the acceleration of ongoing change by either favoring well-known grammaticalization paths (a.o. semantic bleaching) or reducing the range of variation patterns (selection of unmarked structures). It is important to note that in language contact the process of acceleration of change that we have discussed here might also have an evident counterpart in deceleration: in other words, contact might even promote the maintenance of conservative structures, as has often been observed in minority languages studies (cf. Abraham and Leiss 2013 and references cited there). If the hypothesis that contact affects the speed in grammar change proves to be on the right track, the apparent contradiction between opposite forces (i.e. innovation vs conservativity) finally finds a natural explanation.

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[11] Rather on the contrary, lexical borrowing (even of functional words, like the lexical complementizer *ke* in Cimbrian) implies the deprivation of the original functional feature characterization. In fact, a lexical loanword, i.e. an E-language item, acquires the morphosyntactic features of the target language (cf. *The sun is feminine*, by Taeschner, 1983), whereas here, a lexical complementizer gets transferred as a "devoid category".

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