

An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study of Cognitive Processes in Language Contact

Marlyse Baptista
University of Michigan

One of the objectives of contact linguistics is to examine contact situations and their outcomes, including the social contexts in which language contact occurs, and the linguistic properties of the languages or language varieties resulting from such situations. Contact linguists are also concerned with a wide range of processes involved in the emergence of pidgins and creoles, quintessential contact languages. Such processes include reanalysis, restructuring, transfer and convergence, among others.

This talk reports on the preliminary results of three interdisciplinary projects whose common objective is to shed light on the intricate process of language convergence (also known as congruence). The first part of the talk reports on the results of a psycholinguistic experiment aiming at demonstrating how convergence operates (co-authored and funded by an OVPR grant from the University of Michigan). The second describes the design of an agent-based model, aiming at modeling the conversational interactions of individuals on a plantation (co-authored and funded by a MCube grant at the University of Michigan). The third is a collaboration between linguists and geneticists (funded by Noah Rosenberg's NSF grant) showing parallel trajectories of genetic and linguistic admixture in a genetically admixed creole population.

We hope to demonstrate the value of interdisciplinarity and cross-departmental collaborations and how each field brings a specific lens to the research question, ultimately advancing our knowledge and understanding of a particular phenomenon.