The selection of element sources in the verbal syntagms of some stable mixed languages.

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Introduction

Much work on a range of mixed languages has sought to examine ways in which elements of differing origins in the language are combined (Vakhtin and Golovko 1990 on Mednyj Aleut, Kouwenberg 1993 on Berbice Dutch; Bakker 1997, 2013 on Michif, Christiansen-Bolli 2010 on Tadaksahak as a typical Azawagh Valley Songhay language, Gómez Rendón 2008 on Media Lengua, Mous 2003 on Inner Mbugu/Ma'á; see also Matras 2003, and Meakins 2013 for a general picture).

But the picture is complex and the search for a definitive explanation continues as further and more detailed data become available – and as structural changes can be documented in the histories of some of the languages under investigation. A table of relevant data for some mi8xed languages follows.

	Ma'á (Tanzania)	Media L.engua (Ecuador)	Mednyj Aleut (Commander Islands, Siberia)	Michif (Canada, N Dakota)	Berbice Dutch (Guyana).	Tadaksahak. (Mali)
Overall lexicon	Mixed: Bantu, West Rift, Eastern Cushitic, Maasai	85-90% Spanish; rest Ecuadorian Quichua	Predominantly Attuan Aleut; some Russian	French, Plains Cree, many English loans	Dutch, Eastern Ijo, Arawak and Guyanese	75-80% Berber, depending on domain
Nounstems	Etymologically mixed	Mostly Spanish	Aleut (rare Russian nouns)	Overwhelmingly French	Various	Mixed, depending on domain
Nominal Morphology	Pare Bantu	Quechua	Aleut	French	Eastern Ijo	Berber, Songhay
Verb stems	Etymologically mixed	Mostly Spanish	Aleut, some Russian	Cree	Various	Both Berber and Songhay
Finite Verbal Morphology	Pare Bantu	Quechua	Russian	Cree	Eastern Ijo	Songhay
Non-finite VM	Pare Bantu	Spanish	Aleut but sparse	Cree	None	NA

Two other cases: Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri

Two languages from the Northern Territory of Australia, exhibiting the results of interaction between Ngumpin-Yapa languages and English-lexifier Kriol forms.

- Gurindji Kriol: mixed Gurindji and Kriol verbal and nominal lexicon; noun morphology from Gurindji; verbal morphology (TAM, derivational morphology) mostly from Kriol (Meakins 2011).

- Light Warlpiri: nouns (stems and morphology) Warlpiri, verbs and verbal morphology overwhelmingly from Kriol. (O'Shannessy 2005).

Meakins and O'Shannessy 2013 explain the reason for the difference in apportioning elements in the two languages.

Verb groups (syntagms, syntagmas, syntagmata….)

As the table and slides suggest, of cardinal importance to an understanding of the development of mixed languages is the structure of the verb group or syntagm and the linguistically and structurally diverse range of entities which can be included within the boundaries of the verb syntagm.

Among students of mixed languages, languages which divide their components between Verb and Noun according to the origins of the stems and morphology (i.e, Michif) are often distinguished from those which make a primary division of sources between the lexicon and the bound inflectional morphology (e.g. Media Lengua). But the verb is central to both.

Compulsory and minimum verb elements

The range of compulsory and optional forms in a verb group and what else can express ideas which may be expressed by bound morphs vary from one mixed language to another. This becomes clearer when the source of the verbal morphology is compared with the source of the basic or high-frequency lexicon.

Many mixed languages demand a minimum ***number*** of forms in a verb group (at least two each in Mednyj Aleut and Media Lengua, for instance, and at least two morphs are also needed in a Michif verb group), while they may require that certain ***kinds*** of forms - including of course a root - must be present.

Both **transfer of fabric** and **transfer of pattern** may occur, as these are not mutually exclusive (Grant 2002, 2003).

What's in a verb?

There is a very high degree of correlation between the sources of the inflection of the minimally complex mixed language verb (whatever the source of the verb stem may be) and the source of the elements which simpler and more complex verb syntagms in the source languages of the mixed languages exhibit.

(*Very high degree* does not mean *perfect fit*, though: French modals as in itials in Michif, Spanish secondary negation using a free-standing morph in Media Lengua… - both use transferred fabric to echo patterns found in the language providing the verbal morphology: Dave Costa, p.c.).

Thus derivational morphs in these languages (causatives, passives etc.) usually share the same origin as the TAM and person markers, and are, if present, usually retained in the mixed languages.

What else is in a verb?

Many elements (pronominals, negators, etc) may nonetheless be optionally expressed with free rather than bound morphemes in these source languages, and some of them are often usually so expressed in the mixed languages.

Michif: Bakker (1997: 100)

George ušɪpe:hɪke:-w *pur* wɪja =   George ušɪpe:hɪke:-stamaw -e:-w

George write-3 for 3SG   George write-BENEFACTIVE->3'

George writes on his behalf/for him

In many cases of mixed languages, the source of the verbal morphology is a language which was indigenous to the area. Many of these derived much of their lexicon from non-indigenous languages.

The centrality of the verb.

Matras (2003) emphasised the role of discourse in the structuring of a set of mixed languages.

But for some (Media Lengua, Michif, Ma'á) a matter of crucial consideration is the centrality of the verb in sentences in those languages.

Verb morphology may get 'streamlined' with some of the less frequent allomorphy smoothed out in favour of more frequent forms. But it does not get pidginised.

An SAE speaker learning Media Lengua or Michif would not find their verbs simpler than those of Quichua or Plains Cree.

How central?

In many of these languages a sentence can consist of a single word which is a verb form containing morphological material in several slots. This can mark several arguments and carry other kinds of information typical of verb syntagms in the language which provided the verbal morphology.

As what are generally the most complex elements in a sentence, verbs can and do dictate the orbit and morphosyntactic behaviour of the rest of the elements in the sentence.

A couple of simple examples….

Pijal Media Lengua (Stewart 2011: 56; *Spanish* forms in italics)

ese boske-ka *kuida*-ʃka-mi

DET forest-TOP care-PAST_PART-VAL

'The forest was protected.' Note the topicalisation and validation affixes from Quichua.

Michif (Bakker 1997: 87; French forms in italics):

kahkɪja:w awɪjak		*la pwi*	dawe:stam-wak
All	somebody	the rain	want.i-3PL->4

'Everyone wants rain'.

Example: the Michif verb template

Pre-root: Conjunct marker/person agreement-Tense-Mood-modality-Preverb-Aspect (reduplication)-

ROOT-

Post-root: Medial-Final- [these help form the stem]

quantitative valency-direct/inverse-obviative-agreement-plural-conditional.

The number of possible verb forms in the Michif verb is in the thousands (Bakker 1997: 98)

Example: Media Lengua verbs

Morphology (TAM, person, number, validation marker, emphatic marker, causative) from Quichua.

Copula –*ga*- is a clitic in Ecuadorian Quichua and this is the source of the ML copula.

"To have" is *tini*- < Spanish, conjugated as a Quichua verb.

Spanish provides the bulk of the stems.

Negation in ML is Spanish *no* + Verb, transfer of pattern from Quichua *mana* + Verb. Negative verb groups which also use Quichua –chu 'negative' can be found in Muysken (1997).

As a result….

Roughly speaking, in terms of the categories which are overtly expressed the morphological (and semantic) typology of the mixed language verb group is often that of the language which provided the verbal morphology.

- So…Media Lengua marks evidentials because Quichua does;
- the categories marked in the Ma'a verb are those found in Pare,
- and Michif marks inverse and uses multiple medials where necessary because Cree can.

The possibility of later influences

There is always scope for further influence from other languages. Cree borrowed few verbs from French (or English) but it could do so, and Michif absorbed a few verb stems such as *ãfarži* 'to hobble a horse') from French. It also has French forms of copula and the verb 'to have' inflected in the French way (Cree-origin forms of the copula are also available).

Quichua absorbed a few verbs from Spanish (just as it had done lavishly from Jaqi centuries previously), and ML relexified Quichua verbs with Spanish forms (see Muysken 2011). It has acquired a form of the Spanish present participle *–ndo* – and also has a few verbs of Quichua origin.

What about Mednyj Aleut?

The situation of Mednyj Aleut is unusual. Finite verbal morphology, including singular and plural imperatives, plus the infinitive are taken over from the Russian first conjugation (all MA verbs are regular). Non-finite verb forms are from Attuan Aleut, as are verbal extensions such as causatives. (But the MA relative pronoun, which is often replaced in relative clause constructions by participial forms in Russian, is also taken from Russian.)

MA verb morphology is simpler than Russian morphology (it is more regular) and it is much simpler than Aleut verb morphology. Noun morphology in MA derives from Aleut and it is simpler in terms of the number of cases and morphs than that in Russian.

Is this surprising?

Not really. MA comprises elements form two languages, Russian and Attuan Aleut. But we have evidence that many of the members of the community which created the language spoke other languages – Itelmen, Komi, Chukchi, Eskimoan languages, Romani – and spoke Russian (or possibly Aleut) as a second language.

Aleut was already absorbing a large number of loans from Russian when MA probably evolved, and Copper Island/Mednyj Ostrov was first permanently inhabited only in the 19th century, and was depopulated in 1970.

Top tip from the Top End

Drawing upon findings from Indigenous Australian languages in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Heath (1978: 105) emphasised five considerations which may ease the transmission of bound morphs from one language to another: *syllabicity, sharpness of boundaries, unifunctionality, categorical clarity, analogical freedom*.

The presence of (C)V morph shapes also helps things along.

These are to the fore in the Russian morphological component in MA.

Core-Periphery mixed languages

In these the size of the periphery exceeds that of the core and the 'periphery language' may affect part of the structure in addition to the lexicon, but the basic lexicon and morphology in both verbal and nominal elements both come from one source.

The Azawagh Northern Songhay languages (Tagdal, Tadaksahak and Tasawaq) are examples. (So, one may claim, is English….). Tagdal and Tadaksahak causatives are bilingually suppletive (Berber causative forms corresponding to Songhay basic verbs). Rasawaq'a use a Songhay inflection.

Berbice Dutch

Berbice Dutch uses only (a subset of) Eastern Ijo bound inflectional morphology and has plentiful EI lexicon in all realms apart from numerals.

But many free grammatical morphs (including some TAM particles) and much of the lexicon, including lower numerals, are from Zeeuws Dutch, while there are further TAM particles and much further lexicon from Creolese (Guyanese Creole English) and plenty of Lokono/Arawak lexicon.

Conclusion

Verbs and their morphology lie at the centre of mixed languages. In many of these, a sentence can be coterminous with a verb group/syntagm.

These verb groups remain complex rather than simplified.

Because of their complexity and the wide range of features indexed on a verb they are seminal in shaping the general morphosyntactic typology of the mixed languages in question.

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