Metatypy: Two Southeast Asian Examples

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In recent years, Malcolm Ross (2003, and elsewhere) has been writing about the social contexts of contact-induced change, in particular about what he terms 'metatypy', the structural effects and social correlates of intense bilingual contact on what he terms the primary lect, with his emphasis on extending our understanding of the social contexts involved. Ross's work on metatypy is an extension of Thomason and Kaufman's (1988:50) 'borrowing' and Weinreich's (1963 [1953]) 'grammatical interference'. Like Thomson and Kaufman (1988:35), he would argue that social context plays a greater role in determining the outcome of contact-induced change than does linguistic structure.

Although Ross (2003:188) lists some 16 languages that have undergone metatypy along with their metatypic model and provides a characterization of the process, he makes it clear that gaps exist in our understanding both of the structural changes and of the social contexts, particularly the latter. Thus, to Ross's list can be added Hainan Cham, a Chamic Austronesian language of Hainan heavily influenced by Southwest Mandarin, and Anong, a Nungish Tibeto-Burman language of Yunnan heavily influenced by Lisu, another Tibeto-Burman language. In terms of structural changes, both Hainan Cham and Anong are primary lects that have been analyzed in the literature as having undergone contact-induced change. And, for both Hainan Cham and Anong, we have a fairly clear understanding of the social context of the changes.

What this paper does is to take the characterizations of the social contexts provided by Ross, Grace, and others, and to examine them in light of what we know about the social contexts in which Hainan Cham and Anong have undergone restructuring under contact.

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