

## **Long-Lasting Language Contact and its Lexical and Semantic Outcome Based on the Example of Polish Lexical Borrowings in Yiddish.**

Language contact takes place whenever individuals and social groups sharing a common space are forced to communicate using more than one language. Though in our modern, strongly interconnected and mobile world we encounter it on almost every corner, this phenomenon is as old as social and cultural interactions in multilingual groups. However, it is only in the past few decades that researchers have undertaken systematic efforts to describe language contact, creating a new scientific discipline – *contact linguistics*. Though it has been developing rapidly around the world, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries, it still seems relatively unknown in Poland.

Strategies for overcoming linguistic barriers – which is what language contact is actually about – are usually studied in relation to individuals (*bilingualism*) and social groups (*diglossia*). In reviewing their outcome, one can concentrate either on the perspective of the speaker or on the changes discernible in the language matter itself (language system). The longer and more intense the contact and the more domains (i.e. fields of activity such as daily neighborhood contacts, education, the exchange of goods and services as well as cultural and political activities etc.) it involves, the more differentiated and profound these results become. Most of the time, they are unnoticeable to the speakers themselves, for example in situations when they insert words from their interlocutor's language into their own to facilitate mutual understanding. They may also lead to far reaching typological changes and, in extreme cases, even to giving up the native language in favor of another. Thus, contact phenomena form a *continuum of contact-induced changes* with occasional insertions of foreign words into ones own speech on one end and language shift on the other.

The objective of the project is a profound and multi-layered examination of the first three stages of this continuum, which starts with occasional foreign word insertions (*codeswitching*), followed by their borrowing and adaptation to the system of the native language until they become fully integrated and no longer recognizable as alien as a result of a long process of linguistic accommodation. Yiddish, as a language of Polish Jews, which was in contact with Polish for several centuries and for which the latter has become the most important donor-language, has been chosen as the object of the planned research. Even though its duration, intensity as well as social and cultural multidimensionality make it a prime example of mutual linguistic influence, Polish-Yiddish contact has not been thoroughly researched thus far. Although the marks that Polish, being the dominant language in a common area, has left on the substance of Yiddish are not – which has to be stressed – limited to phenomena traditionally associated with lexical borrowing, its thorough study within the framework of the language change continuum is the point of departure for understanding other related linguistic facts of grammatical and structural nature. Using the long-lasting Polish-Yiddish contact as a model, the project aims at formulating general conclusions providing a better understanding of problems such as reasons for borrowing specific words, and factors favoring or preventing their settling within the language. Thanks to research tools provided by digital humanities, in the form of digital databases that can be freely described and searched, a representative corpus of Polish lexical borrowings in Yiddish will be compiled, not only to be used as a research instrument, but also to be made available to the general public as the *Online Dictionary of Polish Borrowings in Yiddish* in the later stages of the project. Due to the relocation of the world center of Yiddish language and culture away from Poland, which had fulfilled that role for centuries past, such a dictionary will not only serve as a scientific resource, but also as a practical reference tool e.g. for foreign translators and scholars, studying Yiddish texts from the period when it was under a strong influence of the local Polish language.