

Hunter-gatherer multilingualism

Asymmetric semantic interaction in Jedek-Jahai bilinguals in a small-scale egalitarian setting in northern Peninsular Malaysia

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How does multilingualism play out in hunter-gatherer settings?

If language evolved in **multilingual hunter-gatherer** settings through **contact** (Evans, 2017) we should examine the effects of language contact in contemporary hunter-gatherers.

Do the characteristics of multilingual **settings** affect **contact outcomes**? (cf. Muysken, 2013)

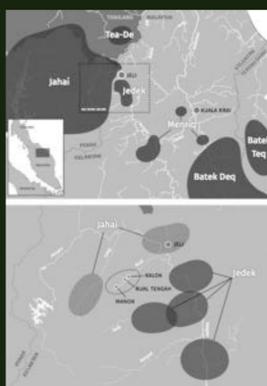
Do we find evidence of **semantic interaction** between languages? (cf. Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008)



In a small-scale egalitarian multilingual setting **typological and lexical similarity, low normativity, task/linguistic domain, and access to speakers** affect bilingual outcomes (cf. Muysken, 2013)

Symmetric AND asymmetric semantic interaction were found

Rual



Yager & Burenhult, 2017

Rual is a site of long-term contact between small bands of Semang subsistence foragers speaking closely related language varieties.

- 106 Jedek-speaking, 53 Jahai-speaking, 10 other Aslian-speaking inhabitants
- high mobility
- band exogamy
- low normativity
- idiolectal variation
- fluid language identities
- fluid boundaries between varieties
- variable naming practices

Austroasiatic



Austroasiatic languages are spoken in Mainland Southeast Asia and India, and predate all other languages spoken on the mainland today. Almost all are spoken by minority communities, most are considered endangered.

Aslian is the branch spoken in Peninsular Malaysia and southern Thailand.

Jahai

1000 speakers

Jedek

106 speakers

Spoken only at Rual



Topological relations

Yager & Gullberg, in press

- Monolinguals: different semantics
- Jedek-identifying bilinguals: **asymmetric** semantic interaction
- Jahai-identifying bilinguals: **symmetric** semantic interaction

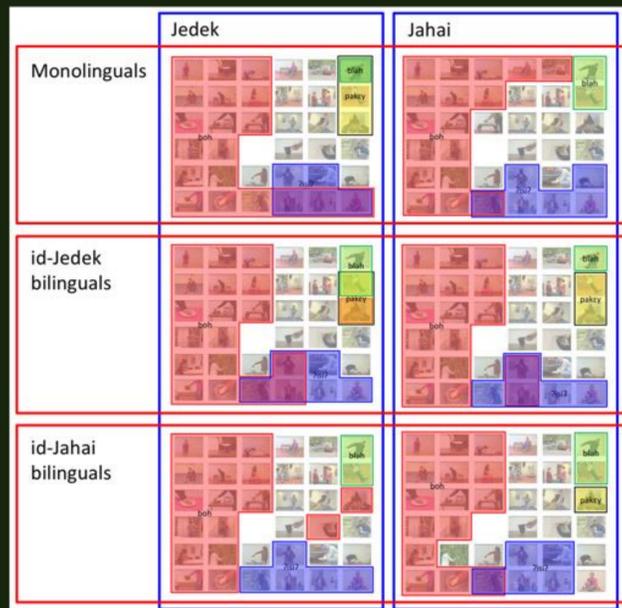


A = Jedek TRM extensions; B = Jahai TRM extensions

Placement events

Yager, in progress

- Monolinguals: virtually identical semantics
- Bilinguals: **symmetric** semantic interaction

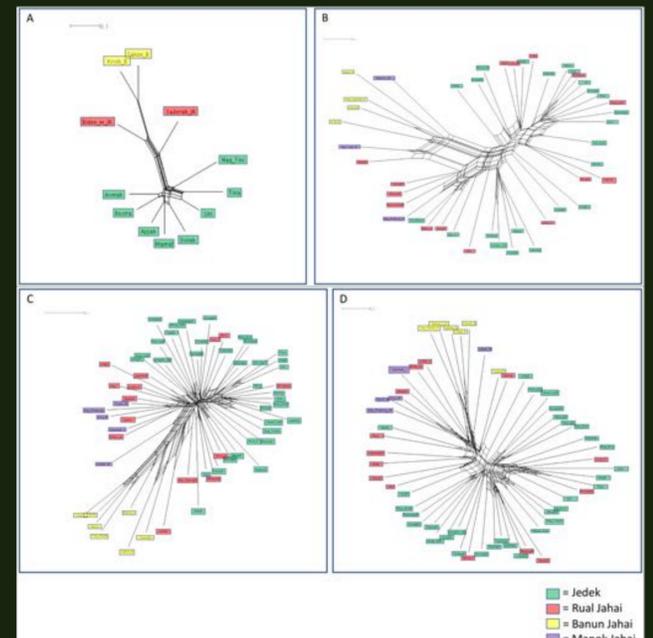


Language production data were elicited in director-matcher tasks using the Topological Relations Picture Series (Bowerman & Pederson, 1992), PUT project (Bowerman, Gullberg, Majid & Narasimhan), and Reciprocal constructions and situation type tasks (Evans et al., 2004).

Micro-variation at Rual

Yager, in progress

- Basic vocabulary data: Rual Jedek and Jahai individuals form **distinct** groups
- 3 other datasets: Rual Jedek and Jahai individuals do **not** form **distinct** groups



A = basic vocabulary data;
B = topological relations data;
C = placement event data;
D = reciprocals data

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