What does Spanish-Quechua Contact tell us about Processes of Linguistic Transfer?

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This presentation centers on processes of linguistic transfer that affect grammatical categories expressed in the Spanish Present Perfect (PP). Historical research on this Spanish verbal form has benefited from a long tradition in Hispanic and Romance morphosyntax, as well as research done on its dialectal variation, both in Spain and Latin America. In consequence, this long tradition led to a set of linguistic factors that are included in studies of the PP of the last decades, making dialectal comparisons possible. More importantly to highlight, however, is the fact that the study of the PP is focused mainly on addressing linguistic factors that center around the conceptual domain of temporal reference (cf. Bybee & Dahl 1989; de Acosta 2011; Rebotier 2017), where indeterminate temporal reference gives way to the grammaticalization of the PP from an anterior to a perfective/past (cf. Mexican and Peninsular varieties, Schwenter & Caccoullos 2008).

Nonetheless, the study of PP in Spanish-Quechua contact situations has produced strong research that shows that in Andean Spanish dialects of Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, the PP has evidential function. Spanish varieties that emerged in contact situations, particularly between unrelated languages (both genetically and typologically), are a fruitful area of research that helps challenge our methodologies in the study of grammatical features and, more importantly, leads us to question our understanding of processes of linguistic transfer and how they emerge. Spanish-Quechua contact is a special case for two reasons: the two languages view time from different perspectives and their contact involves varieties in several countries, which can then be compared.

While Spanish uses an egocentric reference frame, typical of European languages, Quechua uses an allocentric reference frame (Faller 2002, 2011; Shapero 2017; Mannheim, in progress), in which evidentiality and the speaker’s experience toward narrated events, both central to Andean ontology, are prominent. Using diachronic corpora from two Peruvian Spanish dialects, and comparing them to data from other dialectal studies on the Spanish PP, I question the use of only factors connected to a tempo-aspectual perspective for the Andean case, and argue for an additional set of factors focused on the speaker’s perspective towards the narrated events and evidentiality. The results of this revised methodology provide some insight into the different path that Andean Spanish varieties have taken with respect to the PP, as opposed to the usual Tempo-Aspectual path familiar from the literature.