

The Pueblo Region as a Linguistic Area: Diffusion Among the Indigenous Languages of the Southwest United States

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The Pueblo Region as a Linguistic Area: Diffusion Among the Indigenous Languages of the Southwest United States.

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Abstract

The goal of this dissertation is to investigate whether the Pueblo region of the Southwest United States is a legitimate linguistic area (LA). The Pueblo region has long been recognized as a cohesive culture area, but an in-depth examination of the Pueblo region as a linguistic area has not previously been done. Because a linguistic area is by definition an area in which linguistic features have spread through diffusion, traits which are widespread for other reasons (e.g., genetic inheritance or independent parallel development) must be eliminated as evidence for a Pueblo LA. The methodological approach which I adopt emphasizes the historical aspect of diffusion; therefore, whenever possible I identify the source and recipient languages of diffused traits. Through a detailed analysis of the available data on the Pueblo languages, I demonstrate that the Pueblo region is a linguistic area. Furthermore, while the origin of the Pueblo LA most likely predates the arrival of the Navajo in the Southwest (approximately 500-600 years ago), the Navajo have played an important role in the development of the Pueblo LA. Four traits in particular are widespread among the Pueblo languages, and are likely to have been borrowed in one or more of the Pueblo languages, but do not occur in neighboring languages; therefore, these traits strongly support the Pueblo linguistic area. Many examples of localized diffusion provide additional evidence. Other traits which extend beyond the Pueblo region, but show evidence of being diffused in some of the Pueblo languages, suggest that the Pueblos are linked by linguistic diffusion to surrounding areas, such as the Great Basin, the Great Plains, and the non-Pueblo Southwest. Pueblo areal traits have important implications for several aspects of linguistic theory. A number of Pueblo areal traits are counterexamples to proposed linguistic universals, and the occurrence of structural diffusion with relatively little lexical diffusion has repercussions for theories of contact-induced language change. Diffusion among the Pueblo languages also has consequences for theories of Kiowa-Tanoan subgrouping and prehistory, as well as for the proposed Aztec-Tanoan language family.

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The Pueblo linguistic area (or Pueblo Sprachbund, Pueblo convergence area) is a Sprachbund (group of languages with similarities due to language contact) consisting of the language spoken in and near North American Pueblo locations. There are also many shared cultural practices in this area. In the 21st century there are 21 surviving pueblos in the Southwest of the United States, Taos, Acoma, Zuni, and Hopi are the best-known. The main pueblos are located primarily in the states of New Mexico. Contour systems are typical of languages of the Mainland Southeast Asia linguistic area, including Tai–Kadai, Vietic, the Afroasiatic, Khoisan, Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan languages spoken in Africa are dominated by register systems. Many languages use tone in a limited way. Pueblo Indians: Pueblo Indians, North American Indian peoples known for living in compact permanent settlements known as pueblos. Representative of the Southwest Indian culture area, most live in northeastern Arizona and northwestern New Mexico. Early 21st-century population estimates indicated approximately. Pueblo Indian pottery: (left) Acoma water jar, c. 1890, (centre) Santa Clara vase, c. 1880, (right) San Ildefonso water jar, c. 1906; in the Denver Art Museum. Courtesy of the Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado. Each of the 70 or more Pueblo villages extant before Spanish colonization was politically autonomous, governed by a council composed of the heads of religious societies.