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HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS?

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Lecture five

How do Words get Borrowed?

INTRODUCTION

Borrowed words are usually remodelled to fit **the phonological** and **morphological** structure of the borrowing language, at least in early stages of language contact.

The traditional view of how words get borrowed and what happens to them as they are assimilated into the borrowing language holds that loanwords which are introduced to the ***Borrowing language*** by bilinguals may contain sounds which are foreign to the receiving language, but due to ***phonetic interference***

the foreign sounds are changed to conform to native sounds and phonetic constraints.

This is frequently called *adaptation* (or *phoneme substitution*).

- In adaptation, a foreign sound in borrowed words which does not exist in the receiving language will be replaced by the nearest phonetic equivalent to it in the borrowing language.

However, there are many different kinds of language-contact situations, and the outcome of borrowing can vary according:

-**to the length** and
-**intensity** of the contact,
-the **kind of interaction**, and
-the **degree of bilingualism** in the populations.

In situations of **more extensive, long term or intimate contact**, new phonemes can be introduced into the borrowing language together with borrowed words which contain these new sounds, resulting in changes in the phonemic inventory of the borrowing language; this is sometimes called ***direct phonological diffusion***.

For example, before intensive contact with French, English had no phonemic ***/ʒ/***. This sound became an English phoneme through the many French loans that contained it which came into English, such as ***rouge /ruʒ/*** « ***French rouge*** 'red')

In the case of **v**, formerly English had an allophonic [v] but no phonemic /v/. It became phonemic due in part to French loans containing **v** in environments not formerly permitted by English.

The sound [v] occurred in native English words only as the intervocalic variant (allophone) of /f/; a remnant of this situation is still seen in alternations such as *leaf-leaves, wife-wives* and so on, where the suffix *-es* used to have a vowel in the spoken language. Words with initial **v** of French origin - such as *very* from French *vrai* 'true' - caused /v/ to become a separate phoneme in its own right, no longer just the allophonic variant of /f/ that occurred between vowels.

While there may be typical patterns of **substitution for foreign sounds and phonological patterns**, substitutions in borrowed words in a language are not always uniform.

The same foreign sound or pattern can be borrowed in one loanword in one way and in another loanword in a different way.

This happens for the following reasons.

-- In most cases, borrowings are based on pronunciation, as illustrated in the case of Finnish *meikkaa*- 'to make up (apply cosmetics)' based on English pronunciation of *make* /meik/. However, in some cases, loans can be based on orthography ('spelling pronunciations'), as seen in the case of Finnish *jeeppi* [ji:pi] 'jeep', which can only be based on a spelling pronunciation of English 'jeep', not on the English pronunciation (/Jip/) - borrowed nouns that end in a consonant add *i* in Finnish.

Loan words are not only remodelled to accommodate aspects of the phonology of the borrowing language, they are also usually adapted to fit the morphological patterns of the borrowing language.

How do We Identify Loanwords and Determine the Direction of Borrowing?

An important question is: how can we tell (beyond the truly obvious cases) if something is a loanword or not? In dealing with borrowings, we want to ascertain which language is the source (**donor**) and which the recipient (**borrower**).

2.1. Phonological clues

The strongest evidence for loanword identification and the direction of borrowing comes from phonological criteria.

Phonological patterns of the language. Words containing sounds which are not normally expected in native words are candidates for loans.

Phonological history. In some cases where the phonological history of the languages of a family is known, information concerning the sound changes that they have undergone can be helpful for determining loans, the direction of borrowing, and what the donor language was

- Morphological complexity

The morphological make-up of words can help determine the direction of borrowing.

In cases of borrowing, **when the form in question in one language is morphologically complex** (composed of two or more morphemes) **or has an etymology which is morphologically complex**, but the form in the other languages has no morphological analysis, then usually

the donor language is the one with the morphologically complex form and the borrower is the one with the monomorphemic form.

Spanish borrowed many words from Arabic during the period that the Moors dominated Spain (901-1492). Many Arabic loans in Spanish include what was originally the Arabic definite article.

For example,

- English *alligator* is borrowed from Spanish *el lagarto* 'the alligator'; since it is monomorphemic in English, but based on two morphemes in Spanish, *el* 'the' + *lagarto* 'alligator', the direction of borrowing must be from Spanish to English.

- *al-* but are monomorphemic in Spanish. A few examples of this are: *albanil* 'mason' (Arabic *banna*), *albaricoque* 'apricot' (Arabic *barquq*),

- ⊙ - *algodon* 'cotton' (Arabic *qutn* 'cotton'; English *cotton* is also ultimately from Arabic),
- ⊙ *almacen* 'storehouse' (Arabic *makhzin* 'granary, storehouse [plural]' derived from *elmakhazan* [singular] English *magazine* is ultimately from the same source),
- ⊙ *almohada* 'pillow' (Arabic *milkhadda*, derived from (*khad* 'cheek')). Since these are polymorphemic in Arabic, composed of the article *al-* + root, but each is monomorphemic in Spanish, ***the direction of borrowing is seen to be from Arabic to Spanish.***

- - ***Vinegar*** in English is a loan from French *vinaigre*, which is from ***vin*** 'wine' + ***aigre*** 'sour'; since its etymology is polymorphemic in French but monomorphemic in English, the direction of borrowing is clearly from French to English

This is a very strong criterion, but not full proof. It can be complicated by cases of folk etymology, where a monomorphemic loanword comes to be interpreted as containing more than one morpheme, though originally this was not the case.

For example, Old French monomorphemic *crevice* '**crayfish**' was borrowed into English and then later this was replaced by folk etymology with *crayfish*, on analogy with *fish*. Now it appears to have a complex morphological analysis, but this is not original.