

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University of Djilali Bounaama

Department of Foreign Languages

**Language Borrowing**

Defining borrowing is problematic because researchers use different terminology to refer to a number of different language contact phenomena and it is difficult to find generally accepted terminology. The definition given by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) in their pioneering work on contact-induced change has been very influential in the past decade and is therefore probably a good starting point. Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 37) define borrowing as follows:

*“Borrowing is the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language: the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features.”*

 In most cases, in a situation of language contact between bilinguals, words are the first elements to enter a borrowing language. According to Thomason and Kaufman, if bilingualism is wide-spread and if there is strong long-term cultural pressure from source-language speakers on borrowing language speakers, *“structural features may be borrowed as well - phonological, phonetic and syntactic elements and even (though more rarely) features of the inflectional morphology”* (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 37).

Thomason and Kaufman hold the view that *“as far as the strictly linguistic possibilities go, any linguistic feature can be transferred from any language to any other language”* (T&K 1988: 14). It is clear, however, that not all features are equally likely to be borrowed. Thomason and Kaufman therefore propose a very detailed borrowing hierarchy, which has subsequently been used widely by other researchers as a yardstick against which the depth of the borrowing process in contact situation can be measured. The hierarchy is a detailed elaboration of the hierarchies of borrowability that have been proposed earlier in the literature (see below under constraints for more details).

The terminology adopted by Thomason and Kaufman is somewhat different from the terminology used by other researchers. Haugen (1950: 212) defines borrowing as “the attempted reproduction in one language of patterns previously found in another”. The problem of this definition is that the notion “patterns” remains rather vague, and it is unclear to what extent elements beyond the word level are included. Weinreich (1953: 1), on the other hand, uses the term “interference” as a cover term for interlingual influence at different levels (phonological, syntactic, semantic and lexical) and defines interference as “those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language.”

Van Coetsem's definition of borrowing as recipient language agentivity corresponds to Thomason and Kaufman's definition of borrowing, and Van Coetsem's (1988) concept of imposition (source language agentivity) is relatively close to Thomason and Kaufman's concept of interference through shift. Because of the existing confusion over terminology, some researchers have proposed new terms. Clyne (1967 and2003) uses the term transference, partly because of the negative connotations attached to the notion interference. Johanson (1993) introduces the term code copying, as the term borrowing suggests that materials borrowed at some stage will be given back at a later point, which is not the case. Milroy (1997: 311) points out that “as for language contact, it is not actually languages that are in contact, but the speakers of the languages.” I agree with Milroy that there is a danger in seeing languages as discrete entities independent of speakers, because under this view the role of speakers in actuating and diffusing language change (or borrowing) is being neglected. Most researchers have however continued to use the terms borrowing, albeit in slightly differing definitions.

 Researchers have different views on the necessity to distinguish borrowing from other language contact phenomena, such as transfer, convergence and code-switching. Poplack and associates (Poplack 1980; Poplack and Meechan 1995) maintain that borrowing and code-switching are different phenomena. Support for this position comes from Grosjean and associates ( Grosjean 1988, 1995, 1997), who have extensively studied psycholinguistic aspects of codeswitching and borrowing (see under psycholinguistic approaches for more details). Other researchers assume that there is a common set of formal principles to morphological and syntactic structure and that as a result, there may well be parallel constraints on borrowing and code-switching (Appel and Muysken 1987; Muysken 1990). The issue cannot be discussed here in more detail (cf. Treffers-Daller 2005; 2009).

**Classification of Borrowing**:

Bloomfield (1933) is one of the first studies in which an attempt is made at classifying lexical borrowing. He distinguishes between “dialect borrowing, where the borrowed features come from within the same speech-area (as, father, rather with [a] in an [ε] -dialect), and cultural borrowing, where the borrowed features come from a different language.” (Bloomfield 1933: 444). The term cultural borrowing is reserved for the importation of words for cultural novelties, such as spaghetti from Italian, which are introduced to the culture of the borrowing language. Clearly this is an increasingly important phenomenon, especially in relation to the influence of (American) English on other languages. Cultural borrowing is not necessarily one-sided, and intensive contact between speakers of both languages is not a prerequisite. When speakers of different languages come into more intensive contact, borrowing *“extends to speech-forms that are not connected with cultural novelties”* (Bloomfield 1933: 461). This is called intimate borrowing and it is generally one-sided: borrowing goes predominantly from the upper language to the lower language, that is from the culturally, politically or economically dominant language speakers to the speakers of the less prestigious language.

Haugen (1950, 1953) and Weinreich (1953) further develop the typology of lexical borrowing. Haugen's approach is new in that he also discusses the structural constraints on borrowing and the structural effects on the borrowing language as a whole. Weinreich not only discusses lexical borrowing (or in his terminology: lexical interference), but also syntactic and phonological interference. Weinreich also establishes links with the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic theories of his time, and this distinguishes his work from all other approaches to borrowing developed before. The sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects of his work are now out of date, but the classifications of different types of borrowing . Weinreich and Haugen developed are still widely used. As they are very similar, the following discussion is limited to Haugen's typology.

Haugen (1950) distinguishes different types of borrowing, based on the question of whether or not source language morphemes are imported into the borrowing and whether or not substitution of source language morphemes or phonemes by borrowing language elements occurs (see also Backus and Dorleijn 2009 for a further refinement of this typology). We will illustrate the concepts with examples from French-Dutch language contact data, as described in Treffers-Daller (1994).

**Loanwords: Morphemic Importation without Substitution**

When French-Dutch bilinguals import the French discourse marker donc (so) into Brussels Dutch, they keep the French nasal vowel [ɔ] and do not replace it with one or more Dutch phonemes.

**Loan blends: Morphemic Importation as well as Substitution**

Bilingual speakers in Brussels use pertang (however), originally from French pourtant. Because the French nasal vowel [ɑː] has been replaced by the vowel [a] and the nasal velar [ŋ] and the vowel [u] has been substituted by a schwa, this word is often not recognised as a borrowing anymore. The category of loan blends includes hybrids or mixed compounds, which consist of French and Dutch morphemes, such as gemeente-taxe (council tax), where gemeente (council) is Dutch and taxe (tax) is Brussels French.

In the case of loan shifts only a meaning, simple or composite, is imported, but the forms representing this meaning are native (Appel and Muysken 1987: 165). Famous examples are German Wolkenkratzer, French gratte-ciel and Spanish rascacielos, all of which are modeled on English skyscraper (Haugen 1950: 214). In these cases both halves of the compound have been translated into the borrowing language, but no source language morphemes have been imported into the borrowing language. Similarly, in some cases, the meaning of a word can be extended or changed without any importation of lexical material. An example of this phenomenon, called semantic loan, is found in the extension of the meaning of Dutch tellen (to count). In Belgian Dutch, tellen has acquired the meaning ‘to count on’ from French compter sur, as in the expression: iemand waar ge op kunt tellen (someone you can count on).

Poplack and associates introduced a different typology of borrowing, based on the diffusion of these elements throughout a speech community:

*“Established ‘loanwords’ (which typically show full linguistic integration, native language synonym displacement and widespread diffusion, even among recipient language monolinguals) differ from ‘nonce borrowings’ only insofar as the latter need not satisfy the diffusion requirement”* ( Poplack and Meechan 1995: 200).

 Grosjean (1995: 262) refers to nonce borrowings as idiosyncratic loans or as speech borrowings, and Appel and Muysken (1987) use the term lexical interference for the same phenomenon.

The fact that borrowing can also take place between spoken and sign languages has only recently started to be explored. Sandler and Lillo-Martin (2006:95) use the term cross-modal borrowing for two kinds of borrowing in sign languages: the mouthing of spoken words and finger spelling of words from the spoken language. According to these authors, borrowings from English can enter American Sign Language (ASL) in various ways: one strategy consists of replacing the native sign with the finger spelled shape of the first letter of the English word. Thus room and office are distinguished in ASL in that the hand takes the shape of the letters R and O respectively but the movement and location of the sign remain the same. An alternative strategy is to fingerspell loans. Thus, the ASL word no has evolved from finger-spelled N O. Insights from sign language are often overlooked in studies of language contact, and further research into this area is very much needed.

**The Integration of Borrowings**

The phonological integration of loanwords has received much more attention in the literature than the morphological, syntactic or semantic integration. The following overview gives an idea of the issues that have been discussed.

In his typology of borrowing, which is based on the notions of substitution and importation, Haugen (1950: 214) “postulates a morphemic substitution which operates independently of the phonemic”. Other researchers have subsequently corroborated this assumption. Appel and Muysken (1987: 153) state that if one assumes that the lexicon and the phonological component of the grammar are independent, the meaning and the phonetic form of a word are not necessarily always borrowed together. Sometimes the entire phonetic form of a word is borrowed, and sometimes it is partly or entirely substituted by borrowing language sounds. Van Coetsem (1988: 8) reserves the term imitation for the former and adaptation for the latter. Thus, when speakers of English pronounce the French expression déjà vu, they may or may not be successful in realising the French front rounded vowel [ü], which does not belong to the inventory of English phonemes. Many speakers will substitute [ü] with native [u], which is an example of adaptation in Van Coetsem's terminology.

Haugen (1950: 222); Poplack, Sankoff and Miller (1988) and Thomason and Kaufman (1988) show that there is a lot of variability in the pronunciation of loanwords and that this variation correlates with speaker characteristics such as age and bilingual ability. Older speakers who have a less elaborate command of the source language phonology integrate the loanwords to a larger extent into the phonological patterns of the borrowing language than younger speakers do. Poplack and Sankoff (1984) and Poplack, Miller and Sankoff (1988) provide evidence for the fact that phonological integration proceeds as a function of the social integration of the loanword. Widespread loans which have entered the borrowing language at an early date are often realised with borrowing language pronunciation, whereas the pronunciation of more recent and less widespread ones is often more similar to the pronunciation in the source language.

Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 124) demonstrate that the importation of large numbers of loanwords into a language does not necessarily have important consequences for the phonological system of the borrowing language. Although lexical influence of French on English was very heavy, there is very little structural interference from French. French loanwords did not introduce any new phones at all into English, according to Thomason and Kaufman, even though formerly allophonic distinctions, such as the distinction between [f] and [v], were phonemicized in Middle English under the influence of French. In other language contact situations the phonological system of the borrowing language can be changed dramatically, as the case of Asia Minor Greek (Dawkins 1916, in Thomason and Kaufman 1988) illustrates.

As far as the syntactic integration of loanwords is concerned, gender allocation to borrowed nouns is a well explored area (Baetens Beardsmore 1971; Chirsheva 2009; Poplack et al 1982; Wawrzyniak 1985; Poplack, Sankoff and Miller 1988). Morphological integration has been studied by Miller (1997), who focuses on the combination of French derivational suffixes and English roots and vice versa. Others have investigated the addition of inflectional morphology, such as the formation of plurals of borrowed words (Poplack et al 1988; Treffers-Daller 1999).

 Benjamins. J (2014) *Borrowing*. Retrieved from: <http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/20665/1/Borrowing_final.pdf>