Structural borrowing in word-formation: An exploratory overview

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This exploratory overview of structural borrowing in word-formation discusses the multiformity of processes and patterns affected by language contact and then reviews linguistic and sociolinguistic indicators that may impact on the relative plausibility of scenarios of contact-induced change. A number of key features of this type of borrowing are highlighted: first, it is not a negligible phenomenon and should gain a more prominent position in the general contact linguistics literature; second, it is a manifold phenomenon and fine-grained descriptions, in both their qualitative and quantitative aspects, need to be considered; third, certifying the external causation of change is a challenge and the analysis should cautiously be limited to arguments of relative plausibility, which may combine and strengthen each other.

1. Introduction

Structural borrowing in word-formation seems to have been a relatively underresearched area within contact linguistics. Studies on morphological borrowing are numerous (see e.g. Gardani et al. 2015 for a recent overview), but specific discussions on the borrowing of abstract morphological schemata, or morphostructural borrowing, are noticeably rarer. This is especially so in the case of word-formation, a domain in which relevant examples and analyses are sparsely scattered in the linguistic literature. This scarcity may well be partially explained by an actual paucity of attested cases, but it is also likely to partly result from the relative difficulty of identifying structural (vs. material) innovations and of certifying the external (i.e. contact-induced) causation of linguistic change.

The concept of structural borrowing should not necessarily presuppose the non-existence of the linguistic element under study in the recipient language of the contact situation. For instance, even though the conspicuous presence of lexical blends in present-day Polish is seen as a modern innovation, some morphological outputs of lexical blending have been occasionally attested for centuries (Konieczna 2012: 56–57). As Ad Backus (2014: 24) aptly remarks, "change [...] is often a matter of 'merely' increasing or decreasing frequency of use, rather than the adoption or complete loss of particular forms" and it seems advisable not to adopt a narrow focus that would be limited to structures previously completely unattested in the recipient language (structural borrowing *sensu stricto*), but to include the manifold forms of contact-induced change. Structural borrowing in word-formation is thus defined here as the increase or decrease in frequency of use of an abstract word-formation schema caused by language contact and includes the new availability of a virtually unknown schema (i.e. a change from a null to a non-null frequency, or structural borrowing *sensu stricto*).

The approach adopted for this research is cross-linguistic, but it is not of a typological nature. The article more modestly aims to gather together illustrations of a variety of contact-induced phenomena so as to put a number of key issues into a broader perspective. It is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the multiformity of processes and patterns affected

by language contact and presents a qualitative typology of structural borrowing in word-formation and Section 3 then discusses linguistic and sociolinguistic indicators that may impact on the relative plausibility of scenarios of contact-induced change.

2. A multiformity of structural changes

This section examines an illustrative sample of cases described in the literature, from the central, concatenative processes of word-formation, i.e. affixation and compounding, to peripheral, non-concatenative types of structure, i.e. clipping, blending and reduplication.

2.1 *Affixation*

According to R. L. Trask (1998: 322–323), Basque has historically made an extremely moderate use of the pattern of prefixation. Basque prefixes are claimed to result either from affixal borrowing from the neighboring Romance languages, as in the case of *des-* 'dis-', or from structural calquing, i.e. the language-internal forging of a prefix on the basis of a Romance model pattern, as in the case of *ez/ez-* 'no; non-'. This morphological development exemplifies the crossing of the line between material and structural borrowing: the appearance of a new exogenous prefix cannot be considered a simple case of material innovation if it occurs in a context where no pattern of prefixation was already commonly available in the word-formation system of the recipient language.

2.2 *Compounding*

Many patterns of compounding have migrated or varied in frequency of use under the influence of language contact. Berthold Forssman (2000, cited in Heine & Kuteva 2005: 154) reports that nominal compounding was virtually non-existent in the Baltic languages until the 5th–7th centuries CE, when contact was established with the Finnic speakers of Estonian and Livonian, two languages making ample use of the pattern, and it is this event which is surmised to have led to the subsequent presence of noun compounds in Latvian. In present-day Slavic, the new prominence of the bare noun-noun construction is said to come from the heightened influence of English in Central and Eastern Europe (Vakareliyska & Kapatsinski 2014), which has led to an emerging dispreference for the canonical adjective-noun construction, as in Bulgarian for instance (Bagasheva 2016: 18), or to the appearance of a new interfixless construction, as is manifest in Polish (Konieczna 2012: 53; Jaworski 2014: 41–43; Witalisz 2018):[1]

(1a)   adjective-noun construction
        Bulg. *bob.en.a čorba* 'bean.ADJ.FEM soup'

(1b)   noun-noun construction
        Bulg. *bob čorba* 'bean soup'

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[1] For a discussion of the presence/absence of interfixes in Polish noun-noun constructs, see also Cetnarowska (2016).

(2a)   interfixed compounding
       Pol. *gwiazd.o.zbiór* 'lit. star.INTERF.collection = constellation' (Szymanek 2009: 466)

(2b)   bare compounding
       Pol. *seks.turystyka* 'sex tourism'.

Contact-induced change can also become manifest through marked variations in frequency of use. The increased frequency of subordinative nominal noun-noun compounding in French under the influence of English has for instance been measured by Pierre Arnaud (2018 [in this volume]) and, conversely, language contact may also lead to a decrease in frequency of use. In Flemish, a variety of Dutch in contact with French, Johan Taeldeman (1978, cited in Heine & Kuteva 2006: 55) notes that speakers are inclined to prefer the French-induced adjective-noun construct (3a) to the canonical noun-noun construct (3b):

(3a)   *administratieve kosten* 'administrative costs'

(3b)   *administratie.kosten* 'administration costs'.

Similarly, in South Tyrol, where Italian and German are both official languages, the typically Romance noun-preposition-noun construction is developing at the expense of standard noun-noun compounding in the local variety of German (Riehl 2001, cited in Heine & Kuteva 2006: 55):

(4a)   Italian: *il grappolo d'uva* 'the bunch of grapes'

(4b)   South Tyrolean German: *das Bündel von Trauben* 'the bunch of grapes'

(4c)   Standard German: *das Trauben.bündel* 'the grapes.bunch'.

Another formal type of change in compound patterning is also attested. The lexical borrowing of English compounds is considered to have led to the increased presence of semantically right-headed nominal compounds in Romance, at the expense of the canonical left-headed constructions of the noun-noun and noun-preposition-noun types. This has, for instance, been noted for French (Renner 2017) – for common nouns (5a-b) and commercial proper nouns (5c) – and for Italian (5d-e) (Iacobini 2014: 196):

(5a)   *info.bulle* 'lit. info.balloon = tooltip'

(5b)   *rando.fiche* 'lit. hiking.card = hiking guide map'

(5c)   *le Lyon bière festival* 'the Lyon beer festival'
       (rather than the canonical form *le festival de la bière de Lyon*, lit. 'the festival of the beer of Lyon')

(5d)   *acqua.scivolo* 'water.slide'

(5e)   *calcio.mercato* 'lit. soccer.market = soccer transfer market'.

2.3 *Clipping*

Clipping can also be affected by contact-induced change. This is for example the case in Polish, a language in which this operation of subtraction used to be common only in specific lexical fields, i.e. first names (6a), place names (6b) and school subjects (6c), and is now widely applied in informal discourse, without any domain restrictions (6d-e), under the influence of English (Jaworski 2014: 35–38):[2]

(6a)   *Jolanta > Jola*

(6b)   *Warszawa* 'Warsaw' > *Wawa*

(6c)   *matematyka* 'mathematics' > *matma*

(6d)   *manifestacja* 'manifestation' > *manifa*

(6e)   *wykonanie* 'performance' > *wykon*.

In Catalan, a Spanish-induced morphostructural change has also affected hypocoristic formation (Cabré Monné 2008: 900–907). First names were traditionally left-clipped, but they can now also be right-clipped:

(7a)   *Alexandre > Xandre* vs *Àlex*

(7b)   *Montserrat > Serrat, Rat* vs *Montse*

(7c)   *Santiago > Iago* vs *Santi*.

2.4 *Lexical blending*

The influence of language contact on the frequency of use of lexical blending provides a salient cross-linguistic example of recent structural change in word-formation. This may be explained by the fact that the change dates back only a few decades and that it has affected a process which used to be extremely marginal, if not non-existent, in the languages in question. Several scholars have described a similar type and time of change in a variety of Balto-Slavic languages. In their overview of the current contact situation between Latvian and English, Gunta Ločmele and Andrejs Veisbergs (2011: 312) stress that "[g]rowth in the use of blends has also been noted. In the past, blending was a non-existent word formation pattern in Latvian". Christo Stamenov (2015: 175) also reports that "[a] couple of decades ago blending as a means of word-formation was non-existent in Bulgarian". Ewa Konieczna (2012: 57) claims that "never before has Polish witnessed such an upsurge of blends" and Gordana Lalić-Krstin (2008: 237) notes similarly that "[u]ntil fairly recently, blending was practically unknown in Serbian. In the past few years, however, it has skyrocketed, forming hundreds of new blends". Svitlana Filonik (2015: 188) remarks that "[e]ven though there are

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[2] For a discussion of the increasing use of clipping in Polish, see also Konieczna (2012: 54–55).

a few attestations of Ukrainian blends in works published before the 1990s, they are exceptionally rare" and Ievgeniia Karpilovska (2016: 2914) observes more generally that "[d]uring the last few decades, the Ukrainian lexicon has been characterized by an increased productivity of composition, blending and juxtaposition. This is facilitated by wide and intensive contacts of Ukrainian with other languages, primarily, English". Ada Böhmerová (2010: 112) states likewise that "[i]n Slovak the increase in the productivity of blending and the communicative frequency and penetration of blends beyond the category of nonce-words or occasionalisms is rather recent and could be ascribed to the last three decades". It emerges from these descriptions that a remarkable increase in frequency of use of the process of blending can be linked to the decades around the turn of the 21st century and to heightened contact with English in a host of countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The phenomenon is to be tied to the sociolinguistic changes that followed the Revolutions of 1989 and the end of Communist rule in the region, in which the new embrace of the West in general, and of American culture in particular, came with a concomitant embrace of the English language.

2.5 *Reduplication*

Due to the influence of both Chinese and Malay, the use of reduplication is widespread in Colloquial Singapore English (Wee 2004). First names and common nouns can be duplicated to encode a hypocoristic value (8a-d) and verbs can be either duplicated to indicate attenuation (8e-f) or triplicated to mark continuity (8g-h):

(8a)   *Henry > Ry-Ry*

(8b)   *Jeffrey > Jeff-Jeff*[3]

(8c)   *buddy > buddy-buddy*

(8d)   *mummy > mummy-mummy*

(8e)   *stop > stop-stop* 'make a short stop'

(8f)   *cry > cry-cry* 'cry a little bit'

(8g)   *stop > stop-stop-stop* 'keep on stopping'

(8h)   *stare > stare-stare-stare* 'keep on staring'.

As nominal evaluative duplication is attested in Chinese but not in Malay, and verbal continuative duplication is attested in Malay but not in Chinese (while verbal attenuative duplication is attested in both languages), it is assumed that the productive use of noun and verb duplication in Colloquial Singapore English originates from contact with not just one, but two languages. The existence of the formal pattern of triplication is, however, to be

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[3] For a discussion of name reduplication in Colloquial Singapore English, see also Wong (2003).

considered as an internal innovation as it is not attested in either Chinese or Malay (Wee 2004: 267–269).

2.6 *Towards a qualitative typology of structural borrowing*

The previous subsections have shown that a wide variety of changes is attested and it is helpful to observe that, from a qualitative standpoint, they do not affect the different recipient languages to the same extent. A qualitative cline of structural borrowing can be posited – from "minimal" to "slight", "moderate" and finally "heavy" change – depending on the relative degree to which the core of the word-formation system is affected. There is heavy restructuring when a process which used to be virtually unavailable emerges in the word-formation system, as in the case of lexical blending for a number of languages of Central and Eastern Europe. There is moderate restructuring in case of, for instance, positional innovation. This includes the appearance of prefixation (alongside suffixation) in Basque and of right-headed compounding (alongside left-headed compounding) in French and Italian. There is slight restructuring when the general form of a pattern is only marginally modified, as in Polish compounding, which now includes some new interfixless constructions. Finally, the change may be only minimal, when it does not have consequences on the forms of new outputs, as in the case of clipping in Polish. For a fine-grained measure of structural change in a word-formation system, the two dimensions – qualitative and quantitative (i.e. in terms of variation of frequency of use) – should thus be taken into account.

3. Assessing the plausibility of contact-induced change

As Sarah Thomason (2001: 91) aptly puts it, "[e]stablishing the fact of contact-induced change is usually easy when the focus is on loanwords, but it can be much harder, and often impossible, with structural interference. Loanwords are easier to establish because they betray their origin directly". It is comparatively harder to spot structural borrowing because of its schematic nature. It is also hard to measure it because of the difficulty of building diachronic corpora tagged with word-formation information, and hard to fully authenticate it as the assessment is generally only probabilistic. These observations should, however, not be a deterrent to examining the issue and this section discusses various possible indicators that could be considered to enhance the relative plausibility of an external causation of change.

A correlation can first be posited between the form of language contact and the relative likelihood of external causation. Casual contact is expected to lead to lexical borrowing only (Thomason 2001: 70). A weak contact setting, characterized by a remote connection chiefly mediated by the broadcast and digital media (Onysko 2009: 58; Zenner & Van De Mieroop 2017: 77) – as is the case of English in many parts of the world, including the countries of Continental Europe –, is hypothesized to be less prone to non-material (i.e. structural) borrowing than a situation of more intense contact, which may be indexed by widespread bilingualism and/or the co-officiality of the languages under consideration in a given territory, as in South Tyrol, Catalonia or Singapore. It also seems possible to link social, sociolinguistic and linguistic change under certain circumstances. The fact that a sudden social and sociolinguistic change such as the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc at the end of the twentieth century may be documented and tied to a new situation of language contact (see e.g. Przygoński 2016 on Poland) doubtlessly increases the plausibility of external

causation. That an identical change is attested to have occurred concurrently in several languages tied to the same geopolitical event, from Latvian to Bulgarian, also strengthens the hypothesis.

Structural borrowing can also, in some cases, be tied to the presence of lexical precursors in the recipient language and the attestation of such linguistic cues could be deemed to be a factor boosting the plausibility of contact-induced change. This borrowing scenario has already been described for bound morphemes (see e.g. Bombi 2017: 273–275). To take an example, the suffix *-ing* encountered in Spanish and French is not considered to have been straightforwardly borrowed from English. It was abstracted only after a number of lexical borrowings containing this formal ending (e.g. *camping*, *karting*, *rafting*) had entered each language, and after the form was assigned a stable core meaning ('leisure activity'), and thus a morphemic status. The integration into the recipient language is complete only when the new affix is attested to concatenate with native bases, as in (9a-b) for Spanish and (9c) for French:

(9a)   *balconing* 'jumping off a balcony, or between balconies' < *balcón* 'balcony'

(9b)   *puenting* 'bungee jumping' < *puente* 'bridge'

(9c)   *ruisseling* 'hiking up a stream' < *ruisseau* 'stream'.

In a parallel fashion, it could be argued that some instances of structural borrowing are not straightforwardly borrowed, but abstracted on the basis of a set of exogenous units integrated through lexical borrowing. This reasoning is surmised to at least apply to the morphological processes which combine two input words, i.e. compounding and lexical blending. For compounding, the lexical precursors are borrowed compounds which retain the morphostructure of the donor language, but whose morphological abnormality is backgrounded by the fact that they are fully integrated from a lexical standpoint as they display compounding elements which are already part of the lexicon of the recipient language. Examples of this type of compound borrowing from English include:[4]

(10a)   Fr. *webradio* 'web radio'

(10b)   Fr. *science-fiction* 'science fiction'

(10c)   It. *internet caffè* 'Internet café'

(10d)   It. *scuolabus* 'schoolbus'.

For blending, the lexical precursors are borrowed blends which are not morphologically opaque in the recipient language because of the existence of formally similar source words in the recipient and the donor language. Examples of this type of lexical borrowing from English in Balto-Slavic include:[5]

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[4] The French data are taken from Vincent Renner (2017) and the Italian data from Claudio Iacobini (2014).

[5] In (11-12), the Ukrainian data are taken from Svitlana Winters (2017), the Latvian data from Gunta Ločmele and Andrejs Veisbergs (2011) and the Bulgarian data from Christo Stamenov (2015).

(11a)   Ukr. *obamánija* 'Obamania' < *Obáma* + *mánija* 'mania'

(11b)   Ukr. *sekspért* 'sexpert' < *séks* 'sex' + *ekspért* 'expert'

(11c)   Latv. *kaplete* 'caplet (= capsule-shaped tablet)' < *kapsula* 'capsule' + *tablete* 'tablet'

(11d)   Bulg. *glokalen* 'glocal' < *globalen* 'global' + *lokalen* 'local'.

The presence of compounds like those in (10) and of blends like those in (11) can be regarded as mediating the appearance of native-born items such as the compounds in (5) and the blends in (12):

(12a)   Ukr. *akvás* 'kvass diluted with water' < *ákva* 'aqua' + *kvás* 'kvass'

(12b)   Latv. *atkritne* 'trash folder' < *atkritumu* 'trash' + *atvilktne* 'drawer'

(12c)   Bulg. *kljukini* 'gossip news' < *kljuki* 'gossip' + *novini* 'news'.

The presence of lexical precursors in the recipient language makes a scenario of contact-induced change more likely and, more broadly, it should be pointed out that even though lexical borrowing might not necessarily always be a prerequisite for structural borrowing to occur – it is for instance unclear that it is the case for reduplication in Section 2.5 above –, the two types of borrowing go hand in hand, the existence of structural borrowing being tied to non-casual language contact, and so to a substantial concurrent stream of lexical borrowing.

4. Conclusion

This exploratory overview has strived to highlight a number of key features of structural borrowing in word-formation – first, that it is not a negligible phenomenon and should gain a more prominent position in the general contact linguistics literature; second, that it is a manifold phenomenon and that fine-grained descriptions, in both their qualitative and quantitative aspects, need to be considered; third, that certifying the external causation of change is a challenge and that the analysis should cautiously be limited to arguments of relative plausibility, which may combine and strengthen each other. Much remains to be done in order to obtain a deeply informed view of the field and future research in the area should aim to better document a wider variety of individual cases and to devise finer-tuned models of contact-induced change in word-formation.

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