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An evolving Database on Verbal Borrowings

The question as to why most languages have more trouble borrowing verbs than nouns, and as to the possible mechanisms and paths by which verbs can be borrowed, were addressed by EDITH MORAVCSIK in her 1975 paper *Borrowed verbs* on the basis of a small sample of languages. GEORGE HUTTAR gave a brief summary of the state of the art on *Linguist List* in March 2002; and in mid-2004 SØREN WICHMANN collected further data on mechanisms of verbal borrowing through the *Linguist List*. As far as I know, however, no truly substantial typological research has been undertaken in this field thus far.

I have started working on this subject in Spring 2004. My dissertation topic (working title) is “*Towards a typology of verbal borrowing*”, and the first step towards such a typology will be the collection and classification of data and examples of verbal borrowings from a large number of languages.

Methodological and practical problems involved with such a database:

1. the need to gather not only examples of borrowed verbs, but also metadata on the corresponding language contact situation
2. the problem of typologizing language contact situations
3. the question of which linguistic, sociolinguistic, and historical metadata could be relevant for this typology
4. the determination of which strategies of verbal borrowing are to be posited for the database’s typology
5. the question of what should count as *borrowing* rather than *code-switching* and how to define *verb* cross-linguistically
6. the problem of establishing a practical and reasonable sample

ad 1 & 2:

Contact type
1. substrate to colonial language
2. superstrate colonial language
3. geographical neighbor
4. occasional contact (trade etc.)
5. bilingual individual
6. substrate to areal lingua franca
7. superstrate areal lingua franca
8. substrate migrant language
9. science and technology, geek talk, jargon
10. secret language, ludling
11. substrate to areal official language
12. superstrate areal language
13. forced bilingualism
14. multilingual society
15. diglossia
16. language attrition
17. religion, mission, cult
18. cultural prestige
19. domain-specific (other)

Degrees of contact
individual contact
occasional contact
situation-specific contact
regular contact
stratic society

... other ?

ad 3: Metadata currently selected for collection:

- Contact situation (plain text description and types as above)
- Estimated date of borrowing
- Attitude of recipient language speakers towards borrowings in general
- Productivity and frequency of (verb) borrowing pattern(s) in the recipient language
- Lexical status (insertion, replacement, synonym)
- Transitivity of the item in both languages
- Typological information on both languages (from the WALS database)
- Geographic locations of both languages
- Reliability / accuracy of the information
- Reference / source

ad 4: Types of loan verb embedding patterns

Subtype	Macrotype
S 11 - Direct insertion of root or infinitive-like stem	M 1 - Direct Insertion
S 12 - Direct insertion of inflected form	
S 13 - Direct insertion across word class	
S 21 - Affixation with a verbalizer	M 2 - Indirect Insertion
S 22 - Affixation with a causative/factitive	
S 23 - Affixation with a special borrowing affix	
S 31 - Light verb "do", "make"	M 3 - Light Verb Strategy
S 32 - Light verb "go"	
S 3x - Light verb (other)	
S 41 - Borrowing of verb plus inflection	M 4 - Paradigm Insertion
S 51 - Loan translation	M 5 - other

Examples for some of these types:

S 11

Ket < Russian

dasitaruyavet

da-sitat-u-k-a-bet

3SG.F.S-read-3.N.O-ABL-DUR-ACT

‘she reads it’

< *читать* ‘to read’

(VAJDA; WERNER)

S 12

Tasawaq < Touareg (Air)

gháy yilmàq

I swim.PFT

‘I swam’

< *i-lmäq* 3m.PFT of *əlməq* ‘to swim’

(WICHMANN 2004 a,b)

S 13

Tasawaq < Touareg (Air)

ghá b-tásrig

I IPF-sneeze

‘I am sneezing’

< *tusrak* ‘sneezing’

(WICHMANN 2004 a,b)

S 21

Yakut < Russian

Армияҕа сулууспалыы диэн, уонна кэлбэтэҕэ.

Armiya-GA sulu:spa-LA:-A die-An, uonna kel-BAtAχ-(t)A.

army-DAT/LOC service-VR-CVB say-CVB and come-PSTPTCP.NEG-POSS.3SG

‘He (went off) to serve in the army and didn’t return.’

< *служба* ‘service’

(BRIGITTE PAKENDORF, p.c.)

S 22

English < Jakarta Indonesian

downloadin

download-in

download-FACT

‘to download’

< *download*

(elicited data)

S 23

Meyah < Indonesian

di-ebe-belajar

1SG-LW-learn

‘I’m learning’

< *belajar* ‘to learn’

(GRAVELLE)

S 31

Modern Greek* < English (USA)

κάνει retire

kani retire

do.3SG retire

‘(s)he retires’

< *retire*

*of migrants in the USA

(MORAVCSIK 2003)

S 3x

Carib < Guianese French Creole

pentiré poko man

paint busy.with 3SG.cop

‘he is painting’

< *pentiré* ‘to paint’

(RENAULT-LESCURE)

S41

Romani < Turkish

and o sxoljo ka siklos te okursun ta te jazarsun

and o sxoljo ka sikl-os te okur-sun ta te jazar-sun

in ART school FUT learn-2 COMP read-2 and COMP write-2

‘in the school you will learn how to read and write’

< *yazmak* ‘to write’

(BAKKER)

S 51

Ket < Russian

díririúyavet

d-iriñ-u-k-a-bet

3SG.M.S-sign-3.N.O-ABL-DUR-ACT

‘he signs it’

< Ket *iriñ* ‘writing, design’, which can be adjective, noun, or verb; this particular pattern usually calls for adjective roots

(VAJDA; WERNER)

Ad 5: My working definition of verbal borrowing:

A loanverb is any occurrence of a borrowed lexical item which can count as a verb (or is predominantly “verby”) in the recipient (borrowing) language.

Links:

Background Information:

<http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/>

Department of Linguistics, MPI EVA

<http://www.wals.info/>

The World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS)

<http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/files/lwt.html>

MPI EVA Loanword Typology Project

The Leipzig Glossing Rules (conventions and abbreviations used for this paper):

<http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/files/morpheme.html>

Previous LL messages on the issue of verbal borrowings:

<http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/13/13-588.html>

<http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/15/15-1674.html>

Example contribution form

>>>>>> <http://www.linguist.de/jw/loanverb.html> <<<<<<<

— If you have examples of verbal borrowings in whatever pair of languages, please share them with me!!
You can use this online form or contact me by email, mail, fax (see box below).

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