

Loan Phonology and the Two Transfer Types in Language Contact

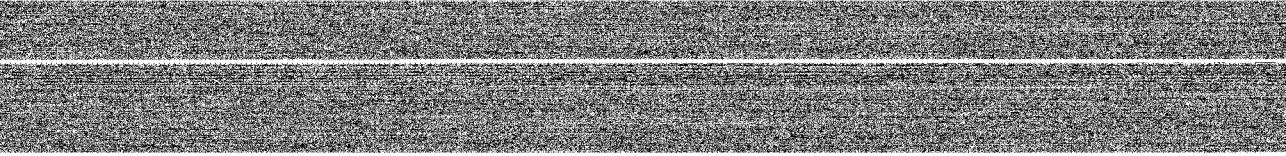
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Preface

“While I make my work public, the fear comes over me that many will consider it an insufficiently documented improvisation, in spite of all the labor that went into it. It is the fate of anyone who wants to deal with cultural topics, that he is compelled to make incursions into all sorts of provinces which he has not sufficiently explored. To fill all the gaps in my knowledge beforehand was out of the question for me, and by using references to justify details, I made it easy on myself. I had to write now or not at all. It was something very close to my heart. So, I wrote.”¹

(Johan Huizinga, Introduction to *Homo Ludens* 1938)

Publication of the present work is not without apprehension and frustration. I present here, in a synthetic view, a proposal for viewing language contact in the context of two transfer types (the notion of *transfer* being taken here in a general sense, and not in the technical one used in the study of language acquisition and creolistics). In elaborating this proposal, I have had to go outside of my specialties, Germanic and historical linguistics, and deal with subfields of linguistics with which I am less familiar. Such is the case, for example, with language acquisition and creolistics; these are areas of research in their own right, which enjoy considerable interest and have engendered a huge amount of research in recent times. While working on this manuscript, I found it necessary and pleasurable to broaden my background in these fields. Since my interest in these subjects did not permit me to overlook or ignore them, I find myself in very much the same humbling situation as Johan Huizinga when he wrote his well-known *Homo Ludens*. The quotation from his introduction does not only serve as an apology for my own shortcomings, it also encouraged me to go my own way in “the jungle of present-day linguistics”, as it has been called (Van Marle 1985:v), and to present research results that have helped me understand more clearly the processes involved in language contact.

This monograph has an experimental character and receives a certain bias from my background as a Germanist and historical linguist; it is first and foremost a *Diskussionsbeitrag*. I would like to believe, however, that the premise of my proposal, namely the fundamental distinction between

the two transfer types in combination with the stability factor, has a good chance of surviving; if it indeed survives, the effort of writing the book will have been worthwhile.

I hope that my work can also be seen as a legitimate attempt at synthesis, a necessary antidote to the undesirable consequences of an ever growing specialization. Since it addresses itself to linguists of diverse specialization and persuasion, parts of the treatment may be found superfluous by some and be welcomed by others, or they may appear too elaborate to some and too succinct to others; I have always tried to keep a balance within the perspective of the study.

One may wonder why 'Loan Phonology' figures first in the title, while the discussion of the two transfer types is so pre-eminent and central in the treatment itself. I started out researching loan phonology, but soon discovered that *loan* and *borrowing* are poorly defined terms in linguistics. I therefore set out to define and delimit them as well as I could, and this led to my development of the two transfer types proposed in Part I, in the course of which I had to give some limited consideration to domains other than phonology. Loan phonology remained, however, the primary goal of the work (Part II), and this is what the title is meant to suggest. Of course, the loan phonology elaborated in Part II is a direct application of the theoretical framework in Part I, but it also represents a restriction in that the basic principles set forth in Part I clearly have a wider range of application than phonology alone.

I want to express my gratitude to colleagues and friends, including graduate students, who commented on different versions of this study. While it was only in a preliminary stage and hardly in readable form, Susan McCormick and Jim Noblitt made their way through it and gave me their continual encouragement and support. Linda Waugh commented on a subsequent version, a version which inspired Tom Young to write an article-length commentary, in which he made useful suggestions for refining the distinction between the two transfer types. Louis Mangione provided me with some material from Chinese, Kashi Wali discussed with me the Marathi-Kannada-Urdu situation (Kupwar, India), and Susan Piliero advised me on a number of diagrams. I also taught a course on the subject and benefited from the reactions of participating graduate students: Hedi Belazi, Anthony Buccini, Christiane Laeuffer and William Reis; Anthony Buccini provided helpful criticism concerning the interesting case of Media Lengua. Wayles Browne, Gregory Guy and John Wolff commented on a later version, and so did Bob (E.M.) Uhlenbeck, who, several weeks in a row, sent me lengthy and valuable annotations. I also received remarks from Guido Geerts, Jan Goossens and Wim Zonneveld, the latter making more extensive contributions. All three made comments that were especially useful for updating my Dutch examples.

This was both welcome and necessary as, since 1968, I have not been able to observe *sur le vif* the Dutch language situation, which, particularly in Belgium, is rather volatile and rapidly changing.

In editing the work, I could count on the help of Deborah McGraw, who helped smooth out my style. Mark Loudon and Johan Seynnaeve proofread the last version of the manuscript and made some useful suggestions as well.

Finally, I would like to thank Wim Zonneveld and his co-editors Ger J. de Haan and Leo Wetzels for including my monograph in their series.

With great pleasure I dedicate this book to my wife, Juliette, my best friend for more than forty years. In her own wonderful way and probably without realizing it, she has been the direct inspiration of this study.

* The ms. was completed in January of 1986, but has been delayed in publication. However, during the printing process I was able to include some references to new publications from 1985, 1986 and 1987.

1 "Terwijl ik mijn werk aan de openbaarheid prijsgeef, bekruipt mij de vrees, dat velen, ondanks al den arbeid, die erin steekt, het een onvolledig gedocumenteerde improvisatie zullen achten. Het is nu eenmaal het lot van hem, die cultuurproblemen behandelen wil, zich telkens te moeten wagen op velerlei gebied, dat hij niet genoegzaam beheerscht. Alle tekorten aan kennis eerst nog aanvullen was voor mij buitengesloten, en met het verantwoorden van elk détail door een verwijzing heb ik het mij gemakkelijk gemaakt. Het werd voor mij nu schrijven of niet schrijven. Van iets wat mij zeer ter harte ging. Dus heb ik geschreven."

CHART OF THE PHONETIC SYMBOLS EMPLOYED

1. Vowels and diphthongs:

front		back
unrounded	rounded	
i	ü	u
e/ɪ	ø/ʌ	o/ʊ
ɛ	œ	ɔ
æ		
a		ɑ

schwa: ə

long: i:, etc.

nasalized: ĕ̃, etc.

diphthongs: ei, ej, etc., uə, etc.

the pairs e/ɪ, ø/ʌ, o/ʊ distinguish between tenseness
(e, ø, o) and laxness (ɪ, ʌ, ʊ)

2. Obstruents and resonants:

		labial	dental	palatal	velar	laryngeal
		labio-dental	alveo-lar	alveo-palatal	uvular	
obstr.	stop	[unvoiced	p	t	k	
		[voiced	b	d	g	
	fric.	[unvoiced	f	θ s	ʃ	X
		[voiced	v	ð z	ʒ	γ
	res.	nasal	m	n	ŋ	
		lateral		l		
		vibrant (fric.)		r	R	
		glide	w	j		h

affricated: tʃ, etc.

aspirated: ph, etc.

the symbol r is also used for indicating the English flapped r

3. Word accent or word prominence is indicated by ' before the accented or prominent syllable

Introduction

0.1. The presence of phonological loans in languages is well recognized in linguistic literature. While the sociolinguistic implications of such loans have received ample attention, their position in relation to phonological systems has been far less systematically investigated. As a result, the status and identity of phonological loans have yet to be addressed comprehensively. The notions of *loan* and *borrowing* also remain ill-defined, because the agent of the action is not taken into account.¹ Standard phonological treatments of language may mention loan phonemes or loan segments and may distinguish loan distributions from native ones, but they usually take no further account of them. Linguists in general often approach phonological loans in a loose and casual way, being attuned to the established opinion of the primacy of the system, and so leave the investigation of the social aspect of phonological loans to sociolinguists and students of language contact. In so doing, they miss the fact that the presence of phonological loans in languages is not only a general phenomenon, but also one which affects the very notion of *phonological system*. As the creolist Whinnom (1971:96) says: "The boundaries of the phonemic system of any language are usually a good deal more fluid than structuralists tend to admit." Language indeed has a built-in potential to absorb and change, and therefore cannot be rigidly demarcated in space or time; the synchrony-diachrony dichotomy is merely a first step in dealing with this fact and should be seen relative to further distinctions.

In line with this, language in general and the phonological system in particular can be viewed as "orderly heterogeneity"² or as a layered entity, as the Prague school concepts *center* vs. *periphery* suggest.³ The fact that there is inherent, principled variation in language (Labov, e.g., 1972:223) was perceived to some degree by prestructuralist dialectologists, but has been downplayed or forgotten wherever an overemphasis on the notion of *system* existed. In sociolinguistics and in the study of language contact (also referred to as 'contact linguistics' or 'interlinguistics'),⁴ efforts are now being made to afford the notion of *variation* a rightful place in linguistic theory.⁵

As we have stated, loan phonology has traditionally played a marginal role in the study of phonology. The phonologists' attitude has made it

difficult to develop the tools, i.e. the theory and terminology needed to deal with loan phenomena. *What we hope to offer here is a general framework within which phonological loans may be considered in a principled manner.* Phonological loans do not occupy a kind of phonological no man's land, but are part of the multilayered character of language, a character that involves differences in function and structural status. The old issue of whether language contact occasions the occurrence of a merged single system or a coexistence of systems has also to be viewed in this perspective.⁶ The proposal delineated in the following pages should also help elucidate the relationship between various forms of language evolution, including pidginization-creolization.

In developing our framework, we will have to examine and re-examine well-known and even commonplace notions and distinctions. At times the treatment may, as a result, appear repetitious. Reiteration, however, serves a purpose, because it is necessary to remold traditional terminology and distinctions to fit a new general framework. This framework or perspective is founded on a key distinction between *borrowing* and *imposition*, a distinction, which as far as we can see, has not been made in the way it is proposed here.

The concept of *imposition* refers to the phenomenon usually called *transfer*, coined by Lado (1957:11). He writes that "when learning a foreign language we tend to transfer our entire native language system in the process". The concept of *imposition* is also contained in the notion of *interference* used by Weinreich (1953:1);⁷ this notion will be further examined later on (section 4.1, 1). Since the fifties the two terms *interference* and *transfer* have been widely used,⁸ while our concept of *imposition* has occasionally been applied as a nontechnical term.⁹ Both Weinreich and Lado use their notions to promote an approach to language contact known as *contrastive analysis*. From our viewpoint a major problem with *transfer* and to a lesser degree with *interference* is that the meanings of these words are not specific enough. They do not indicate the direction of the action and thus fail to bring out the agent of the action. They do not allow us to delimit *borrowing* consistently, since *borrowing* may also be considered a form of *transfer* and even of *interference* in the general sense of the words. These two notions have indeed "a long and confusing history", as Andersen (1983:7) notes.¹⁰ The main purpose here will be to delimit borrowing and imposition as two distinct types of *transfer* (in the general sense).¹¹ The distinction between *borrowing* and *substratum* or *superstratum*, used in historical linguistics, will also be discussed (section 4.1, 1), as here, once again, the agent of the action is not considered. And finally, from the standpoint of a theory of translation, the concept of *phonological translation* from a source language to a target language has been proposed (Catford 1965:56-61), but it, too, does not differentiate transfer types.

The role of the speaker is of crucial importance to our definitions of *borrowing* and *imposition*. From the viewpoint of a speaker who comes in active contact with another language, there is a *source language* and a *recipient language*. If the recipient language speaker is the agent, as in the case of an English speaker using French words while speaking English, the transfer of material (and this naturally includes structure) from the source language to the recipient language is *borrowing* (*recipient language agentivity*). If, on the other hand, the source language speaker is the agent, as in the case of a French speaker using his French articulatory habits while speaking English, the transfer of material from the source language to the recipient language is *imposition* (*source language agentivity*). Of direct relevance here is the fact that language has a constitutional property of *stability*; certain components or *domains* of language are more stable and more resistant to change (e.g., phonology), while other such domains are less stable and less resistant to change (e.g., vocabulary). Given the nature of this property of stability, a language in contact with another tends to maintain its more stable domains. Thus, if the recipient language speaker is the agent, his natural tendency will be to preserve the more stable domains of his language, e.g., his phonology, while accepting vocabulary items from the source language. If the source language speaker is the agent, his natural tendency will again be to preserve the more stable domains of his language, e.g., his phonology and specifically his articulatory habits, which means that he will impose them upon the recipient language. *In short, the transfer of material from the source language to the recipient language primarily concerns less stable domains, particularly vocabulary, in borrowing, and more stable domains, particularly phonological entities, in imposition.* Each transfer type thus has its own characteristic general effect on the recipient language. A consideration of the two transfer types combined with the stability factor will consequently have a predictive power.

What is transferred from the source language to the recipient language consequently depends on the transfer type and the definitions of borrowing and imposition. Due to the lack of clear distinction between transfer types, that is, because of the ill-definedness, vagueness and the often interchangeable use of such terms as *borrowing* and *interference* in earlier approaches, linguists have not had a differentiating gauge for establishing what can be transferred from one language to another. As a result, different interference or borrowing hypotheses have been advanced.¹²

0.2. Our argumentation in this monograph proceeds according to a well-defined plan. In Chapter 1 we discuss the fundamental distinction between the two transfer types, *borrowing* (*recipient language agentivity*) and *imposition* (*source language agentivity*), with a number of important