

## ON THE INTEGRATION OF BORROWINGS

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**ABSTRACT.** While the adaptation of foreign material to the patterns of the recipient language is generally seen as the norm, it has however to be admitted that it is a highly idiosyncratic process, which causes many borrowed words to have a certain linguistic status for some time after they are adopted into a language. The article tries to identify the stages through which borrowed words go in the process of integration.

**Keywords:** *integration, interference, code-switching, loanwords*

**1.0.** It is generally assumed that words borrowed from one language into another are subject to the system of the borrowing language, being manipulated so that they conform to its morpho-syntactic rules, word-formation methods, phonology and spelling (Bloomfield, 1933; Weinreich, 1968; Clyne, 1967, 2003; Myers-Scotton, 1993, 2002; Winford, 2003). Thus, integration is defined as the habitualization through repetition of certain instances of interference from one language into another (Hasselmo, 1970:179) and seen as part of a threefold classification of language contact phenomena, with *codeswitching* being the use of successive stretches of the two languages, *interference* defined as the overlapping of the two languages, and *integration* – the extreme of complete adaptation of items from one language to the phonology and morphology of the other language. In terms of Haugen's (1953) distinction between *importation* and *substitution*, integration can be seen as a case of what the same author calls importation with phonological and morphological substitution.

Integration is a matter of degree, better described in gradient rather than categorical terms. Thus, Myres-Scotton (1993) prefers to look at this process as a continuum, ranging from fully integrated to totally unadapted words, rather than a “done deal”. Mackey (1970), too, remarks upon the blurred line between a word's transitory status in the language, which he calls interference, and its entrenchment and establishment into the language, which he calls integration. Finally, Clyne (2003) refers to integration in terms of a centre-periphery continuum, of how much the word is treated as part of the recipient language and of how stable or variable its use is.

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Trying to define the upper end of this integration continuum, Grosjean (2001:335) states that “a loanword is finally accepted when it is no longer treated differently from other words in the language and when dictionaries, national academies, and influential writers accept it. It is then a loan only in the historical sense”. He goes on to remark, however, that only a small percentage of the borrowings in the speech of bilinguals are ever integrated into the language, the factors accounting for this high “mortality rate” being primarily structural and sociocultural. The first aspect has to do with the stability of the language as a morphosyntactic and phonological system, which tends to reject new entries that will create homonymy of confusion. Sociocultural factors, on the other hand, are related to variables such as the relative prestige of the two languages in contact, language loyalty, puristic attitudes and other related factors.

It becomes clear from this account that, while the adaptation of foreign material to the patterns of the recipient language is generally seen as the norm, it has however to be admitted that it is a highly idiosyncratic process, which causes many borrowed words to have a certain linguistic status for some time after they are adopted into a language.

Another important component of the integration process is its two dimensional character. While traditionally the linguistic criterion has received more attention, as it was believed that a loanword had to be adapted at every level of the recipient language before it could be considered fully assimilated (Bloomfield, 1969; Haugen, 1953), some writers have incorporated social factors into their criteria of integration, recognizing that the linguistic integration of borrowed words is only one aspect of their assimilation into the language. Hasselmo (in Kelly, 1967:135) proposes to describe linguistic and social integration by two different terms – *adaptation* and *adoption*. Adaptation ranges from complete lack of linguistic integration, through partial linguistic integration to a complete linguistic integration and from complete lack of social integration, through partial social integration to complete social integration. While recognizing the difficulties that appear in the study of these dimensions, Hasselmo draws attention to the fact that, although strongly correlated to each other, linguistic and social integration are not completely parallel and can sometimes evolve in opposite directions: Complete linguistic adaptation is possible in the case of foreign identities that show a low degree of regularity of occurrence in the context of speech representing L1 and, conversely, items that show a high degree of regularity of occurrence in such context may show a low degree, or even complete lack, of adaptation to L1. The higher the level of analysis, the more important this distinction becomes. Identities larger than words are often not subject to phonological and /or grammatical integration but it is not uncommon that they exhibit a degree of regularity of occurrence in the context of speech representing L1 that makes it necessary to speak of them as in some sense ‘socially integrated’” (1967:135).

Thus, a word may be socially integrated if it satisfies the criterion of frequency of use and the speaker acceptance, even if it is not integrated linguistically. Moreover, some authors claim that foreign element can be regarded as socially integrated from the very beginning of its entrance into a language if this language does not have an equivalent for it (Grosjean, 2001).

While the existence of the two types of factors, i.e. structural and social, in the integration process, is generally regarded as valid, less agreement exists when it comes to assigning paramount importance to one or the other category. Weinreich (1968:46) was among the first researchers to recognize the separate existence and importance of psychological and socio-cultural factors in the integration process, proposing a separate line of analysis for them: “Thus, a choice is often made by the speaker between integrating and non-integrating the transferred words – a choice which seems even more clearcut in the matter of grammar than in sounds. The choice itself would appear to depend not on the structures of the languages in contact, but rather on individual psychological and socio-cultural factors prevailing in the contact situation. These must be analyzed independently”.

Hasselmo (1970), too, speaks of integration in terms of the binary choice a speaker has when introducing words from one language into the discourse of another: either to preserve these words in their original shape, or to adapt them to the structural patterns of the other language. Integration becomes in this way a matter of personal choice, a variable of such factors as attitudes towards borrowing foreign material, bilingual ability, or specific patterns of incorporation, and cannot be defined solely on linguistic grounds.

Other writers have tried to prove the prevalence of linguistic factors over social and psychological ones, by demonstrating different behavior in language pairs under the influence of approximately the same set of socio-linguistic factors, but differing in structural aspects. Thus, Treffers-Daller (2001) argues that perceived equivalence or congruence between the integrated and unintegrated forms in two languages in contact can determine integration or, on the contrary, lack of it. She is able to show that the adaptation of French past participles differs in Dutch and German, because in the former language the difference between adapted (ex: *ge-march-eer-d*) and unadapted forms (*march-e*) is considerable, thus making it rather obligatory, while in the latter the integrated and unintegrated forms can be considered to be more equivalent (ex: *arrang-ier-t* and *arrang-e*), and therefore integration is seen as more optional. Based on this, it is proposed that structural factors have an influence on qualitative differences in language contact patterns, while sociolinguistic factors can be a variable as regards quantitative differences between individual speakers, “such as that some speakers in the Strasbourg group produce more unintegrated past participles than others”.

The multitude and diversity of positions with regard to this problem prove that, as seen from the two perspectives, i.e. linguistic and social, loanword intergration is a very complex and variable process. Its complexity results from the rather intricate interplay of several factors, which compete against each other in various ways in the adaptation process. The main variable across which integration varies are generally recognized to be: bilingual ability, frequency of use, time-depth, language attitudes, typology of languages in contact, and word classes.

**2.0.** It is generally assumed that bilingual ability of the borrowing speakers play a crucial role in the conforming of borrowed material to host language rules, and can be used to explain many of the irregularities that characterize mixed codes in general. Haugen (1953) uses this factor in order to explain the vacillation displayed by some English loanwords in his American Norwegian corpus. Using this dimension as a guideline he proposes a three-stage integration process: the *pre-lingual stage*, characterized by little or no bilingualism, in which foreign words are reproduced according to recipient language rules, resulting a lot of irregularity or ‘random integration’, the *‘adult bilingual’ stage*, characterized by more systematicity in the production of loanwords, and the *stage of ‘childhood bilingualism’*, characterized by a high level of bilingualism, and showing the introduction of sound types from the donor language into the recipient language.

A main characteristic of these stages is the fact that they may co-exist in a speech community, with important consequences for the integration process. Thus, even once a loanword has been assimilated, it is not safe from change, because, in a community where a foreign language is becoming increasingly important, borrowed words are subject to the so-called process of ‘re-borrowing’ (also called ‘denativization’), whereby already adapted words are reintroduced into the language in an unadapted form, presumably from extra-linguistic reasons. The observation that loanwords show various degrees of integration as a function of the bilingual ability of the speakers has led others (Mougeon et al., 1985) to speak of the ‘loanword disintegration’ in a community whose members are becoming increasingly bilingual.

Evidence of the correlation between loanword integration and level of proficiency in a foreign language comes from Bernsten and Myres-Scotton (1993), who, analyzing the integration of English loanwords in Shona, find that only 35% of the borrowed words in their corpus are fully integrated, while 20% of the loan types are totally unintegrated by all speakers; a third category consisted of loans that were integrated by some speakers (8%), but unintegrated by others (37%). This situation is accounted for in terms of a high degree of bilingualism in the speech community resulting sometimes in doublets or pairs of words with a fully assimilated one and another unassimilated term. Moreover, it is explained in a larger framework of the general social profiles of the speakers, such as degree of urbanization, educational level and gender, with urban, more educated people showing less integration than other social categories.

Another aspect of the relationship between incorporation and proficiency in the source language can be the existence of conventionalized patterns for morphological adaptation, reserved for incorporating foreign material only. Increased bilingualism very often leads to the creation of such conventionalized patterns, which become in time a distinctive feature of the bilingual discourse. The result is paradoxical: these special incorporation devices lead to an incomplete integration of foreign words, since they will distinguish them from native material. Such is the case with the verbal incorporation strategy involving a host language auxiliary, carrying all the necessary verbal morphology and leaving the borrowed verb unintegrated (Backus, 1996).

This consequence of intense bilingualism is discussed by Baetens-Beardsmore (1982: 44) who draws attention to situations in which words are borrowed not into monolingual communities, but into bilingual ones, made up of a large number of speakers sharing the same linguistic background and following some bilingually determined patterns. In such a situation, borrowed terms are not integrated according to monolingual norms, but according to some community based bilingual norm, which in turn, can have important consequences, leading to diachronic change.

**3.0.** The frequency with which a borrowed word is used is directly linked to its morphophonemic adaptation to the rules of the recipient language because “the more a pertinent term of foreign origin is used in the bilingual’s speech (and also in that of the monoglot, too), the more integrated it must be” (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1982: 44). High frequency of use is usually equated with social integration and it tends to remain independent of the linguistic realm, as there is no way of telling from the single occurrence of a borrowed word in discourse, whether it is a case of interference or a case of integration. On the other hand, the concept of frequency of use is rather vague and difficult to make more specific, the notion of what exactly makes a word frequent enough to count as a socially integrated lexeme being doomed to remain arbitrary.

Moreover, frequency of use can also be subject to misinterpretation, as there are cases when a word from one language is frequently used in the discourse of another showing little or no morphophonetic and/or syntactic integration. Poplack and Sankoff recognize another difficulty in the measuring of frequency: “to measure frequency or degree it is necessary to know not only the number of times an item occurred but also all the times it did not occur when it might have” (1984: 107), which is, they admit, a rather formidable undertaking for any study of language contact. Acceptability, or the number of people who use a given word, can, too, be impaired by such subjective considerations as the prestige attached to a certain language or the individual socio-linguistic profile of the speaker, so that it doesn’t follow automatically that large diffusion of a word guarantees its linguistic integration.

Despite all these drawbacks, frequency has been proven to play an important role in the integration process. Poplack et al. (1988) have shown that 85% of the nouns used by a single speaker were integrated morphologically with respect to number, as compared to 98.4% of words used by more than ten speakers. The same correlation was found between frequency and consistency of gender assignment, leading to the conclusion that increased diffusion of a word is strongly correlated with host language affixation.

**4.0.** Phonological and morphological integration of loans is often correlated with time-depth, which means that the highest degree of integration is found in the oldest foreign lexemes. Appel and Muysken (1987) argue that the integration process sometimes spreads across several generations and that the degree of integration is generally indicative of the time of borrowing. Evidence to support this hypothesis

comes from a study by Nortier and Schatz (1988, cited in Boumans, 1998), who compared phonological and morphological integration of foreign words from five language pairs, and found the highest degree of integration with the language pair in the longest contact (Spanish and Ecuadorean Quechua, dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century) and the lowest with the language pair in the shortest contact (Dutch and Moroccan Arabic in contact only since the 1960s).

However, Boumans (1998) draws attention to the fact that this apparent rule applies only in certain social and historical situations, namely when the contact with the donor language weakens or disappears over time. In this case the socio-linguistic facts of the contact situation are overridden by the internal laws of language stability, which are responsible for the integration of loanwords in the first place. Integration can, however, proceed in the opposite direction or slow down, when for economic or cultural reasons the impact of the donor language increases in intensity; the result in this case is that already integrated loans are replaced with more exact copies of the word. Thus, the social and linguistic pressures resulting from this sociolinguistic context overrule the internal pressures of language integration.

**4.1.** Another important factor which has been shown to influence the integration process is an attitudinal one, and it refers to whether the recipient language speakers want or do not want to sound like donor language speakers. Such attitudes can be promoted by certain values attached to foreign sounding or looking words, for example social prestige or fashion. This aspect can be of great importance in today's linguistic global environment, where English has become the international language of business and communication and is being increasingly perceived as modern and fashionable.

Pandharipande (1990) was able to show that the non-adaptation of some foreign lexical items in her English/Marathi bilingual data fulfils an important social function, rendering the discourse more 'modern' and 'non-native', by marking it [+foreign] and [+modern], since the source of these foreign words (English) represents 'modern culture'. Pandharipande further hypothesizes that the mixed code as such, not just the foreign material in it, becomes functionally active, being more similar to the guest code, and more modern than the one with integrated English words. A major claim of the study is that this functional constraint overrides structural factors in the integration process, the degree of adaptability of a foreign constituent to the host language structure being determined by its function in a given context. Registers such as informal conversation call for adaptation, while for those related to fields like modern technology, medicine and so forth, a mixed code with unadapted loans is a more appropriate strategy. Register becomes thus a variable in the integration process.

**4.2.** This correlation between degree of integration and register has also been noted in the case of English borrowings in Romanian. Stoichițoiu-Ichim (2001) remarks on a general tendency for contemporary Romanian to retain the original form of English words, especially in fields such as commerce, advertising, sports, or fashion: "Terms from the domain of commerce and advertising, those connected to fashion and sports, etc



– in the category of luxury borrowings – preserve their forms unadapted because the prestige and the phonetic impact of the English words constitute, as a rule the only justification for their presence in the language. It is relevant that some corrupted forms, specific for the spoken language (ex. *bișniță*, *blugi*, *badigard*, *ciungă*) will never appear in the commercial texts or in advertising where the forms *business*, *(blue)-jeans*, *body-guard*, *chewing-gum* always appear” (2001: 97).

Given that English is regarded today as the language of modernity and prestige, it would not be surprising to find that the influence of this factor is considerable, and sometimes outweighs tendencies in the direction of linguistic integration.

Stoichițoiu-Ichim’s observation regarding the different integrational behaviour of ‘necessary’ and ‘luxury’ loans is a reformulation of the more classical distinction between cultural and core borrowings, and coincides with Myers-Scotton’s (1993, 2002) proposal that the same factors promoting the adoption of forms for which the recipient language has an equivalent will trigger the non-integration of these loanwords as well. Thus, while core borrowings show a lower degree of conformity to the host language rules, cultural ones diverge from the original model earlier and more readily. Such a situation occurs especially when the source language is the language of a group with more socio-economic prestige than that of the recipient language, and can be part of what the same author has called ‘elite closure’, i.e. a group making their speech and using patterns different from that of the masses, for example by producing loans as close to the originals as possible. It becomes thus evident that pragmatic considerations are sometimes at the back of the integration process, determining its direction and pace.

**4.3.** Another general idea that must be taken into account in any description of loanword integration is that there is a very powerful relationship between morphological integration and word category, with some word classes (nouns and verbs) being more likely to be assimilated than others (adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, etc.). This difference can be explained in terms of Hopper and Thomson’s theory of word class centrality or periphery in the language. They argue that nouns and verbs are the most central parts of a sentence, and therefore carrying the most inflections in order to be differentiated from each other and to indicate unambiguously the relationships they hold with other words in the sentence. This is why morphological integration proceeds more readily in the case of heads (nouns and verbs) as opposed to modifiers (foreign adverbs, adjectives and other parts of speech) for which word order is often the only evidence of linguistic integration into the host language.

Furthermore, Clyne (2003) shows that the degree of integration can vary only across word classes, but also according to different morphosyntactic aspects of the same word. For example, in his corpus of English/German bilingual speech, words like *Carpenter* or *Plumber* are integrated into German by receiving the masculine gender marking of the article, but their plural may be unintegrated (-s), or integrated (zero); similarly, some verbs may be better integrated in their strong than in their weak form.

**5.0.** Examples supporting this idea of central and peripheral integration come from various studies, although sometimes with contradictory results. Thus while some authors (Boumans, 1998) have found that nouns are more readily integrated than verbs and other parts of speech, others (Heath, 1989) have been able to show that French borrowings in Moroccan Arabic are affected differently by the process of linguistic integration, with verbs being assimilated more completely than nouns, presumably due to different restrictions imposed by the morpho-syntactic rules of the recipient language. Thus, it becomes clear that structural aspects of the languages in contact, together with the social and psychological factors in the profiles of the speakers, can be used to explain much of the variability inherent in the process of borrowings integration.

**5.1.** Finally, the type and degree of integration is highly dependent on the structures of the languages in contact with languages that rely heavily on morphology, like Hungarian and Turkish, tending to integrate words, while isolating languages such as mandarin and Vietnamese tend not to (Clyne, 2003; Halmari, 1997). This becomes obvious when approaching integration from a cross-linguistic perspective. Thus in a comparative study of Moroccan Arabic and Turkish as immigrant languages in the Netherlands, Boumans (1998: 53) found considerable differences between the two language pairs in terms of the integrational routines they used. While Turkish, which is an agglutinative language, is highly productive with embedded Dutch nouns, marking them for number, case, possessive and derivation, Moroccan Arabic embedded Dutch nouns are subject to hardly any morphological process. Given the large number of inflectional paradigms that Romanian uses in order to mark various word classes and categories, it can be hypothesized prior to any analysis that most of the English loans will be integrated morpho-syntactically

The analysis of the factors responsible for loanword integration leads to several important conclusions. First, no single factor can be used to explain this process, although in some contact situations some factors are more important than others. This prevalence of one factor over the others is, however, subject to considerable cross-linguistic variation. Second, given the intricate way in which they combine and vary from one contact situation to another, it is impossible to postulate any universal theory of integration in general. The interplay of determining factors is highly dependent on the specificity of the languages in contact, and even for the same language pair can change considerably from one period to another. The description of integration should therefore proceed in gradient rather than categorical terms.

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