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THE ROLE OF BORROWED WORDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *This article examines the role of lexical borrowing in the historical and contemporary development of the English language. The study focuses on the ways in which contact with other languages has expanded the English lexicon, introduced new semantic fields, contributed to stylistic differentiation, and influenced patterns of word formation and pronunciation. Particular attention is given to Latin, Scandinavian languages, French, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic, Hindi and other languages that have contributed vocabulary to English at different historical periods. The article argues that borrowing should not be viewed merely as the passive accumulation of foreign vocabulary. Borrowed words are actively adapted to English phonological, morphological, semantic and orthographic systems and may subsequently participate in productive word formation. The analysis also considers the relationship between borrowing, cultural contact, political power, trade, scientific development and globalization. On the basis of historical-linguistic analysis, the article concludes that lexical borrowing has been one of the principal mechanisms through which English has developed its unusually heterogeneous vocabulary and acquired the flexibility required for international communication.*

Keywords: *lexical borrowing, loanwords, English language, language contact, lexicon, etymology, semantic change, globalization, word formation.*

РОЛЬ ЗАИМСТВОВАННЫХ СЛОВ В РАЗВИТИИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

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Аннотация: В статье рассматривается роль лексического заимствования в историческом и современном развитии английского языка. Анализируется влияние языковых контактов на расширение английского словарного состава, формирование новых семантических сфер, стилистическую дифференциацию и развитие словообразовательных моделей. Особое внимание уделяется заимствованиям из латинского, скандинавских языков, французского, греческого, итальянского, испанского, арабского, хинди и других языков. Обосновывается положение о том, что заимствованные единицы не просто механически включаются в английскую лексику, а адаптируются к ее фонологической, морфологической, семантической и орфографической системе. Делается вывод о том, что лексическое заимствование является одним из важнейших механизмов исторического развития английского языка и его превращения в гибкий международный язык общения.

Ключевые слова: заимствование, заимствованные слова, английский язык, языковой контакт, лексика, этимология, семантическое изменение, глобализация, словообразование.

INGLIZ TILINING RIVOJLANISHIDA O'ZLASHMA SO'ZLARNING O'RNI

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Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada leksik o'zlashuvlarning ingliz tilining tarixiy va zamonaviy rivojlanishidagi o'rni tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda turli tillar bilan bo'lgan aloqalar ingliz tili lug'at tarkibini kengaytirgani, yangi semantik sohalarni shakllantirgani, uslubiy differensiallashuvni kuchaytirgani hamda so'z yasash imkoniyatlarini boyitgani yoritiladi. Lotin, skandinav, fransuz, yunon, italyan, ispan, arab, hind va boshqa tillardan kirib kelgan birliklar tarixiy bosqichlar asosida ko'rib chiqiladi. O'zlashma birliklar ingliz tiliga shunchaki tayyor shaklda kirmasligi, balki uning fonologik, morfologik, semantik va orfografik tizimlariga moslashishi asoslab beriladi. Tadqiqot natijalari leksik o'zlashuv ingliz tilining rang-barangligi, moslashuvchanligi va xalqaro aloqa tili sifatidagi rivojlanishini ta'minlagan asosiy mexanizmlardan biri ekanini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: leksik o'zlashuv, o'zlashma so'zlar, ingliz tili, til kontakti, lug'at tarkibi, etimologiya, semantik o'zgarish, globallashuv, so'z yasalishi.

INTRODUCTION

The vocabulary of a language is never a completely closed or static system. It develops in response to changes in society, technology, culture, political organization and patterns of communication. Among the mechanisms that make lexical development possible, borrowing occupies a particularly important position. English provides an especially clear example because its vocabulary reflects centuries of sustained contact with languages spoken in Britain, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Durkin describes English borrowing as a long historical process that must be studied through evidence from dictionaries, corpora and historical texts rather than through simple lists of etymological labels (Durkin, 2014).

The importance of borrowing is therefore not limited to the number of foreign words present in English. Its deeper significance lies in the way borrowed vocabulary has altered the expressive resources of the language. French contributed extensive terminology associated with law, government, social relations and culture; Latin and

Greek supplied major layers of learned, scientific and academic vocabulary; Scandinavian contact affected everyday vocabulary and may have interacted with broader grammatical changes; Italian and Spanish contributed terms connected with art, music, food and exploration; and numerous languages have contributed words associated with local cultures, commodities, technologies and social practices.

The present study aims to examine borrowing as a structural and cultural force in the development of English. The objectives are: (1) to outline the principal historical stages of lexical borrowing; (2) to identify major donor languages and semantic fields; (3) to analyse the adaptation of borrowed words within English; (4) to explain the relationship between borrowing and semantic, stylistic and morphological change; and (5) to assess the continuing role of borrowing in contemporary global English.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is qualitative and descriptive-analytical in design. It is based on historical-linguistic scholarship, etymological evidence and representative lexical examples from major periods of English. The principal methodological approaches are historical-comparative analysis, etymological analysis, semantic analysis and contextual interpretation. The study treats borrowing as a process embedded in multilingual contact rather than as an isolated lexical event. This approach is consistent with modern historical work that emphasizes the social conditions under which words are transferred, the identities of speakers, and the possibility of multiple inputs into the history of a lexical item (Durkin, 2014; Millar, 2020).

The analytical framework distinguishes between the source language of a lexical form and the historical pathway through which that form reached English. This distinction is important because English has often borrowed through complex networks of contact. The research also considers the degree of integration of loanwords, from relatively transparent foreignisms to fully conventionalized lexical items whose foreign origin is no longer salient to ordinary speakers. Latin became one of the earliest major

sources of lexical influence. Some Latin words entered the Germanic languages before the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain, often through contact associated with trade, material culture and Roman civilization. Later Christianization created another important channel. Terms connected with religion, learning, books and institutions entered Old English from Latin, while some were transmitted through other languages. Such borrowings demonstrate that lexical transfer often accompanies changes in social institutions and cultural practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Scandinavian contribution is especially significant because it resulted from prolonged contact rather than a single historical event. Viking settlement and interaction in areas of Britain brought speakers of Old Norse and Old English into sustained contact. Everyday words such as sky, skin, skirt, window, husband, law, take and they illustrate the lasting lexical consequences of this contact. The historical importance of Scandinavian influence also extends beyond vocabulary: contact between related Germanic varieties created conditions in which lexical and grammatical features could interact. Millar (2020) emphasizes the importance of Celtic, Norse and French as major external influences in the history of English.

Donor language	Representative examples	Important domains
Latin	school, street, altar, minister, data	religion, education, administration, science
Old Norse	sky, window, law, take, they	everyday life, law, nature, grammar-related vocabulary
French	government, justice, court, beauty, cuisine	government, law, culture, society, food

Greek	theatre, philosophy, biology, democracy	science, philosophy, medicine, arts
Italian	opera, piano, balcony, studio	music, architecture, arts
Spanish	tomato, tobacco, canyon, ranch	food, geography, exploration, culture
Arabic	algebra, alcohol, coffee, tariff	science, trade, commodities
Hindi/Indian languages	bungalow, jungle, shampoo, pyjamas	daily life, environment, clothing

The table illustrates that borrowing is strongly connected with cultural domains. A language tends to borrow when speakers encounter objects, institutions, technologies or concepts for which an established native term is unavailable or less prestigious. Nevertheless, borrowing may also occur even when an equivalent exists, particularly when the donor language carries cultural prestige or when the borrowed form becomes associated with a particular social identity. This explains why English has repeatedly borrowed not only technical terms but also words for food, clothing, entertainment, social behaviour and everyday objects.

One of the clearest contributions of borrowing is lexical expansion. English has historically shown a strong capacity to incorporate foreign vocabulary while retaining a large native core. Durkin (2014) demonstrates that estimates of the proportions of words from different source languages depend on the dataset and on the criteria used to identify borrowing. Therefore, broad numerical claims about the percentage of borrowed words should be treated cautiously. The more important observation is qualitative: English has acquired lexical resources from a very wide range of languages.

Borrowing also creates lexical differentiation. English often possesses several words that refer to similar concepts but differ in register, historical association or

semantic nuance. Native and Romance vocabulary may form stylistic contrasts, allowing speakers to select between more informal and more formal alternatives. This characteristic is particularly important in academic, legal, political and literary English, where register-sensitive lexical choice contributes to precision and rhetorical effect.

A borrowed word rarely remains completely unchanged. Speakers tend to adapt unfamiliar sounds and sound sequences to the phonological system of the receiving language. The degree of adaptation varies according to the period of borrowing, the prestige of the donor language, the frequency of the word, and the intensity of contact. Some recent borrowings preserve distinctive pronunciations, while older loans may undergo extensive phonological change. Contact can even contribute to broader phonological developments. Research in language-contact phonology shows that loanwords may introduce sound patterns that were previously marginal or absent in a recipient language. In English, French loans are relevant to discussions of the development and distribution of certain consonantal contrasts. Such effects show that borrowing may interact with the phonological system itself, although the influence of any individual set of loanwords must be evaluated historically rather than assumed automatically.

A crucial sign of successful borrowing is the ability of a loanword to behave like an English word. Once borrowed, a lexical item can receive English inflectional endings, participate in compounds, and combine with productive affixes. This process is especially visible in vocabulary of Latin and Greek origin. Scientific and academic English makes extensive use of classical roots and affixes, which have become productive resources for creating terms in fields such as biology, medicine, technology and linguistics. Borrowed roots can therefore cease to function merely as isolated loanwords and become components of a larger word-formation system. For example, elements associated historically with Greek or Latin can appear in numerous modern compounds and technical formations. Durkin (2014) emphasizes the importance of Latin- and Greek-

derived elements in scientific and technical language. Their productivity illustrates how borrowing can change not only the size of the lexicon but also the mechanisms available for generating new vocabulary.

Borrowing frequently results in semantic change. A word may enter English with a meaning that is close to, but not identical with, its meaning in the donor language. It may then undergo narrowing, broadening, specialization, metaphorical extension or other forms of semantic development. Consequently, the modern English meaning of a loanword cannot always be reconstructed simply by consulting the source language. Reborrowing and multiple input further complicate lexical histories. A form may enter English from one language, disappear or change in meaning, and later return through another language or through renewed contact. Durkin's historical analysis shows that the identification of loans requires careful attention to multilingual contexts and multiple possible sources rather than assuming a single linear path.

The coexistence of native and borrowed vocabulary has contributed to the rich stylistic resources of English. In formal writing, Romance and Latin-derived vocabulary is often prominent, while Germanic words remain highly productive in informal speech. This is not an absolute rule, but a tendency that can be observed across registers. Writers can exploit these differences to create levels of formality, emotional distance, technical precision or rhetorical emphasis. The stylistic value of borrowed words is also connected with their cultural associations. A word may evoke a particular country, historical period, social group or cultural practice. Recent borrowings can retain a stronger sense of foreignness, while older borrowings may become stylistically neutral. The movement from marked foreignism to ordinary vocabulary is therefore part of lexical conventionalization.

Contemporary globalization has intensified lexical contact. International travel, migration, social media, entertainment, commerce and digital communication expose English speakers to vocabulary from a growing number of languages. Some words enter

English through direct interpersonal contact, while others spread through global media. The internet accelerates this process because a lexical innovation can circulate internationally within a very short period. At the same time, globalization has created a complex situation in which English is both borrower and donor. World Englishes develop through local contact, and English varieties incorporate words from indigenous and regional languages. Such forms are evidence that English is not a single uniform system but a family of varieties shaped by different histories of contact. The study of borrowing therefore contributes to the broader understanding of English as a global language.

The findings of the present analysis support the view that lexical borrowing is a multidimensional mechanism of language development. First, it expands the inventory of lexical items. Second, it introduces new semantic and stylistic distinctions. Third, it can affect phonological and orthographic patterns. Fourth, borrowed roots may become productive components of word formation. Finally, borrowing records relationships among communities and reveals the historical circumstances under which languages come into contact.

CONCLUSION

Borrowed words have played a fundamental role in the development of the English language. From early Latin influence and contact with Celtic and Scandinavian languages to the extensive French contribution after the Norman Conquest, and from Renaissance learned vocabulary to contemporary global borrowings, English has continually expanded through contact. This historical openness has produced a lexicon characterized by exceptional diversity and flexibility. In the contemporary period, globalization has intensified the speed and geographical range of lexical exchange. English is simultaneously a major recipient and donor language, and its global varieties continue to develop through local contact. The future of English will therefore almost certainly involve further borrowing, adaptation and hybridization. Rather than

weakening the language, such processes demonstrate its capacity for innovation and accommodation.

In conclusion, the role of borrowed words in English should be understood historically, structurally and socially. Loanwords are not merely foreign additions to an otherwise fixed vocabulary; they are evidence of contact, cultural exchange and linguistic creativity. The development of English illustrates how a language can preserve a strong inherited core while continually incorporating external resources. This combination of continuity and openness is one of the central characteristics of the English lexicon and one of the principal reasons for its remarkable expressive and international capacity.

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