

English Loan Words as Contributions in the Development of Annang Language

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ABSTRACT

Languages are never static. They infinitely produce structures that are novel but understood and acceptable by the community. It is such productivity that contributes to the flexibility and versatility of every language. Research in Crosslinguistic Influence (CLI) reveals an enormous interaction between English and mother-tongues in Africa. Many languages of the world develop through the process of borrowing and since this involves mixing the systems of two languages, what evolves is a hybrid or relexification. The new word which is a modification of an L2 element is known as a loan word or a Language Learner's Language (LLL). Annang, which is a language spoken in South-South Nigeria by about two million people, has benefited immensely by borrowing from English to develop itself. Generally, borrowing arises in culture-specific cases where L1 lacks the concept in its system. Such loan words undergo modifications in phonology and word structure. As a complex procedure in the process of developing Annang language, borrowing involves various modifications in the system of English to suit the exigencies of the Annang English speaker.

Keywords: Cross Linguistic Influence, Loan Words, Phonology, Annang

Introduction

Studies in Second Language Acquisition and Learning (SLAL) in the 1960s assumed that L₂ learners face difficulties as a result of impositions by their first language. Interference is said to take place if differences are detected between L₁ and L₂. On the other hand, similarity between the two languages would aid learning. This process in SLAL is generally referred to as language transfer. The differences or similarities are said to be responsible for negative or positive transfer respectively. Moreover, if the differences are such that L₁ negatively affects L₂ there is proactive inhibition whereas if L₂ negatively affects L₁, there is retroactive inhibition. Such assumptions have been subjected to a number of criticisms.

Ellis (1985) observes that L₂ errors are not predominantly the result of interference. There are other ways in which L₁ may contribute to learning: learners may not transfer L₁ rules into L₂ but may avoid using the rules that are absent in their L₁ in a process referred to as Avoidance. Moreover, learners may use L₁ as a reservoir from which they consciously borrow to improve their performance in learning. This process is known as Borrowing. Such views contradict the traditional belief in interference in SLAL situations. Marton in Ellis (1985:19) maintains that

... there is never peaceful co-existence between two language systems in the learner, but rather constant warfare, and the warfare is not limited to the moment of cognition, but continues during the period of storing newly learnt ideas in memory.

We have noticed some disparity in the opinion of some linguists with regard to the role of L₁ in SLAL. Some linguists consider the idea of interference as a Behaviourist Concept which plays little or no role in SLAL. Felix in Ellis (1985:19) observes that

... L₂ acquisition of syntactic structures in a natural environment suggest that interference does not constitute a major strategy in this area ... it seems necessary to me to abandon the notion of interference as a natural and inevitable phenomenon in L₂ acquisition.

Apart from issues such as Avoidance and Borrowing, L₂ acquisition involves such processes as Foreignizing, Literal translation as well as Inter/Intralingual transfers (Ellis, 1985; Faerch and Kasper, 1987; and Kleinmann, 1977). Smith and Kellerman (1986:1) object to the term “transfer” as not being broad enough to cover all aspects of L₁ influence on L₂ learning. They suggest the term “Crosslinguistic Influence” (CLI) to subsume such terms as “Transfer”, “Interference”, “Avoidance”, “Borrowing” etc. CLI has gained much popularity in linguistic research. Ringbom (1987:49) maintains that “what now seems to be accepted everywhere is that Crosslinguistic influence is a very important factor in L₂ learning”. In his research on what happens when Finish and Swedish speakers come in contact with English, the author observes that the foreign language learner is more handicapped in writing than in speaking. He then concludes that

...Cross-linguistic similarities facilitate L₂ comprehension... Cross-linguistic similarities facilitate not only comprehension, but also learning, and the second is that production, too, will be facilitated, at least to some extent, if we accept that comprehension and production constantly interact with each other (Ringbom, 1987:137).

The Concept of Linguistic Productivity

The term creativity was used by Chomsky to refer to the ability of the speakers of a language to produce and understand sentences they have not heard before. According to Chomsky, it is a generative grammar that can explain this ability (Matthews, 1977:81). Chomsky's idea of creativity related mainly to the production of well-formed sentences. In this sense, therefore, he noted that the body of potential sentences in a language produced by a finite number of elements is indefinite. This led to the notions of grammaticalness and acceptability: “Acceptability is a concept that belongs to the study of performance, whereas grammaticalness belongs to the study of competence (Chomsky 1965:11).

Every speaker has a linguistic reservoir which harbours potential structures. And there is no limit to such structures. When the speaker uses these structures in conformity with the rules of the grammar, they are acceptable by the other members of the linguistic community.

Lyons (1981:18-19) identifies productivity as one of the properties that contribute to the flexibility and versatility of every language. Other properties are arbitrariness, duality, and discreteness. Productivity “... is the property which makes possible the construction and interpretation of new signals” (Lyons, 1981:22). This implies that there is no end to the construction (creation) and understanding of new structures in any language. Speakers of any

language have the potentiality of creating new utterances provided such creation falls within the limits set by the rules of the grammar. In other words, productivity is rule-governed.

To some extent, therefore, the terms productivity and creativity are synonymous. They refer to the property of permitting novel combination of elements in structures as well as the application of such structures. A writer or speaker is said to be creative or productive if his application of a word or an expression is novel but not deviant. This ability to generate novel structures on account of the innate potentials in a speaker is characteristic of human language, which is open to an infinite number of uses (Lyons, 1981:18ff; Wallwork, 1969:12)

Productivity in Nigerian English underscores the influence exerted by the Nigerian environment on the English brought by the Europeans to Nigeria. Environmental influences, mostly those relating to culture, have changed the status of the English language in Nigeria. English has been subjected to a number of changes and consequently has adapted itself to its new environment. The English would be surprised that their English would no longer recognize them in Nigeria. Time was when Nigerians went to learn the Whiteman's English. Today, if the Whiteman must be at ease in Nigeria, he must stoop to learn Nigerian English.

We have already noted that Nigerian English is the result of the influence of Nigerian culture on the English language. Culture here has to do with socially acquired knowledge. And knowledge in this situation covers a wide spectrum: experience, authority, intuition, common sense, reasoning and even research findings. Cultural transmission and biological transmission are interdependent and affect linguistic competence. Nature and nurture are inseparable. Language and thought are interdependent. An individual therefore thinks mainly along the parameters determined by his language and culture. This does not, however, rule out the fact that the human mind is flexible and can always accommodate new ideas and concepts. With respect to language, phonological, syntactic and semantic properties such as phonemes, letters, words and sentences are concepts. Meanings are concepts. And there are basic differences between one language and another. Such differences make translation from one language to another difficult.

Moreover, there are some culture-specific concepts which do not exist in other cultures. When such languages come in contact, there must be a way out in the expression of customs, objects and institutions. In the interaction between English and the Nigerian environment, lexical creation and borrowing are linguistic processes (devices) that mediate between the Nigerian cultures and Western culture culminating in an Interlanguage.

Borrowing as a process in the process of linguistic productivity

Borrowing is the introduction "of specific words, constructions, or morphological elements" from one language to another (Matthews, 1977:41). In linguistics the term "loan" covers a wide range of ideas, all under a broader term "borrowing". The term "Loan word" is used to designate a word imported from another language. For example, in Hausa the word "motoci" is a loan from the English word "motor". The term "Loan translation" or calque indicates a literal translation of items of the borrowed language into the borrowing languages. For example, Yule (1966:65) has cited the following cases of loan translations from English by different languages.

English Word	Items in Borrowing Language	Loan translation
Skyscraper	French: un grate-ceil	"Scrape-sky"

Language	Word	English loan word
Japanese:	Suupaamaaketto	Supermarket
	Rajio	Radio
Hungarian:	Sport	Sport
	Klub	Club

	German: Wolkenkratzer	“Cloud-scraper”
Superman	German: Uebermensch	“Super-man”
Loanword	German: Lehnwort	“Loan-word”
Boyfriend	Japanese: Boyifurendo	“Boy-friend”
Hot dogs	Spanish: perros claientes	“Dogs hot”

Moreover, the term “Loan shift” has to do with a change in the meaning of a word borrowed into another consequent upon its use in the borrowing language over time. Ringbom (1987:121) has noted that “LN-influence is manifested in the use of ... relexifications, hybrids and blends, and in complete language shifts”. A shift occurs when the meaning of a concept deviates from what it was originally intended in the borrowed language. It is from here that the term “Loan concept” emanates. There is also the issue of “Loan blend” whereby two words of different languages constitute a hybrid with one meaning. Again there is the case of “Loan word phonology” in which certain words undergo a change in pronunciation to suit the phonology of the language which borrows it. Examples are cited in Hudson (2001).

Quite an elaborate work has been undertaken on borrowing. For example Hudson (2001:55-58) is of the opinion that borrowing “involves mixing the systems” of two languages. It also involves “the levels of syntax and semantics”. Features of syntax may be borrowed from one language to another mostly by people who are bilingual in both as code-mixing encourages languages “to become more similar in the syntax so that items from each may be easily substituted for one another” (Hudson, 2001:58). In this sense therefore borrowing is a means through which different languages mix up and develop.

The English language has an extensive vocabulary largely due to borrowings from other languages. Hudson (2001:55) cites the following loan words in the English language: Karaoke (Japanese), paella (Spanish), Schnapps (German), eisteddfod (Welsh), sputnik (Russian), and fait accompli (French). Yule (1966:65) has identified the following words as loan from different languages: alcohol (Arabic), boss (Dutch), croissant (French), lilac (Persian), piano (Italian), pretzel (German), robot (Czech), tycoon (Japanese), yogurt (Turkish) and Zebra (Bantu).

Other languages also borrow from English. Yule (1966:65) cites the following examples:

	Futbal	Football
French:	Le stress	Stress
	Le whisky	Whisky
	Le weekend	Weekend

These examples demonstrate borrowing as a

process in the process of linguistic productivity. Borrowing underscores the fact that “each individual’s language is unique because of our different individual experiences” (Hudson, 2001:106). And it must be noted that linguistic experiences are largely the product of our culture.

Two major reasons have been identified for borrowing:

1. In borrowing, the speaker pretends “to be a native speaker with whatever characteristics we associate with the stereotype” (Hudson, 2001:55)
2. “Another reason, of course, is that there is simply no other available word, in which case the link to the country may be irrelevant, or at least unintended” (Hudson, 2001:55-56)

This second reason is more plausible, generally acceptable and answers to the issue of culture specificity. Every language is unique in its concepts and ideas. In many instances there may be no means to sufficiently grasp the concept and use it in a manner intended and acceptable by the target language. Borrowing often resorts to explanations and not translations as such translations often lose the ingredients originally intended by the native speakers. According to Baker (1999:21)

The source language may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or even a type of food. Such concepts are often referred to as ‘culture-specific.

Borrowing generally undergoes a relexification process whereby words of the target language are replaced with “new” words activated in the native language without actually changing the structure of the original words. Halliday (1978:165) observes that “The principle is that of same grammar, different vocabulary” and calls the process “relexicalization”. According to Wardhaugh (1991:75) the theory of relexification “attempts to provide a serious explanation for the fact that pidgins and creoles associated with different standard languages have certain common structural features but quite different vocabularies.

In many instances, many African languages have relexified the English language and in this way developed their vocabularies. Borrowing therefore is a much more complex process than some linguists consider. Though Ringbom (1987:52) is of the opinion that borrowing “occurs only in the domain of lexis”, he observes that “it may result not from a gap in knowledge, but from inadequate control” of the grammar of the new language. The author has done an elaborate study using the case of Finish, Swedish and English in Finland. He concludes that “by taking over the semantic properties of the L₁-equivalent, the learner uses a previously known L₂-word in an extended sense” in a procedure known as “under-differentiation” (Ringbom, 1987:116).

The complexity of the process of borrowing is summarized thus:

Borrowing in its purest form, complete language shift, differs from lexical transfer in that the search for a lexical item activates a word in L₁ or LN, and this item is then taken over into L₂ in an unmodified form. In other instances, L₁ and L₂ (or LN) procedures may interact, leading to the use of hybrids or blends or resulting in relexifications, where a L₁-word is modified phonologically to fit (assumed) L₂ norms better, often on the basis of perceived cross-linguistic patterns or phonological correspondences (Ringbom, 1987:116).

English Loan Words as contributions in the development of Annang Language

Languages constantly expand their grammar because of everyday contact with other cultures. Whenever two languages meet, there are bound to be certain mutual characteristics exhibited by them. Such mutual relationships cover almost all the domains of language including phonology, lexicology, syntax and semantics.

Annang is a language spoken by over two million people in South-South Nigeria. The term is also used to designate these speakers as an ethnic nationality. The earliest study on Annang was conducted by a missionary, S. W. Koelle, in 1854. Further researches on the language have been stimulated by Udondata (1993). Annang is spoken by over two million people and has developed a symbiotic relationship particularly with Efik, Ibibio, Ibeno, Igbo and English, influencing and being influenced by them.

The earliest contact of Annang people with English dates back to the 18th century when European colonialists arrived the shores of West Africa. The European missionaries, merchants and administrators had to devise various means to communicate with the natives. The natives too were anxious to learn from them. It was in this way that the marriage between Annang and English was consummated. Apart from those who had attended the whiteman's schools and could speak English, the natives who never went to school forced themselves to speak English. They could pick a few English phrases like "Gurumoni" (Good morning), "Isorai" (It's alright), "Tankio" (Thank you) etc.

Borrowing as a process in the development of Annang language is a complex procedure involving all sorts of modifications in the grammar of English to suit the exigencies of the moment in the Annang cultural environment. It also emphasizes the need of the Annang person to satisfy some prestige instinct especially as English is a *lingua franca* for Nigeria.

Borrowing is one aspect through which the Annang language undergoes continual change which aids the development of the language. The point has been stressed by Dalby (2004:VII) that the demands that human beings make on language in the unending process of communication is a major source of development of the language:

All 'living languages' or 'mother tongues' – all the languages that children learn when they first learn to speak – are continually changing. The change happens in at least two ways: for language change comes from the very nature of childhood learning, and also from the demands that we make, throughout life, on the astonishingly flexible medium of communication that language is.

The development of Annang language through English loan words underscores the fact that the world is fast becoming one melting pot of culture. The English language, which was the language of the British colonial masters in Africa and other places, has left an indelible mark

wherever it sets its feet on. In Nigeria in particular the impact of English on the Mother Tongues and its traces are quite pronounced and cannot be ignored.

The data available in this study fall under two categories: idiosyncratic dialects of the learner and expressions which are culture-specific. The idiosyncratic dialect of a learner of English is an inter-language (Udondata, 2001). What the learner produces is midway between the target language and his L₁. It is also known as the Language Learner's Language (LLL). The following are examples in Annang:

Annang	English
(i) Isabed	Elizabeth
(ii) Satide	Saturday
(iii) Sonde	Sunday

One easily discovers a violation of phonological stipulations. In (i) /d/ replaces /O/. In (ii) and (iii) /e/ replaces the /e^h/ in the last syllables.

— But Corder (1981:18) has warned:

I suggest that it is misleading to refer to the idiosyncratic sentences of the second language learner as **deviant**. I also suggest that it is as undesirable to call them **erroneous** as it is to call the sentences of a child erroneous because it implies willful or inadvertent breach of rules which, in some sense, ought to be known. Whereas, of course, sentences are idiosyncratic precisely because the rules of the target dialect are not yet known.

The second category of words available in our data are culture-specific words.

- 1) “áfù”: This is a modification of the English word “Half”. Originally the word “afu” meant “Half penny”. Half penny was one of the smallest denominations of money introduced by the British to Nigeria. In Annang the concept of “Half” applies to situations where things are divided such as clothe, kola or orange. It would be unthinkable to “divide” money so as to get “Half money” in whatever denomination. The word “afu” has become a loan concept undergoing a shift. When an Annang speaker says, “Nnyeneke ba afu”, it means he has no money on him. It is also embodied in the expression “Unamma ba afu” (You can't do anything).
 - a. “ńai-ńai”: This is borrowed from the English word “Nine”, The British merchants who brought the tray to Nigeria used to sell it at “Nine Pence” each. From the nine pence that the tray was sold, the tray has borrowed it name in Annang language.
 - b. “Śisi”: This is borrowed from the English expression “Six pence”. Eventhough the six pence has become extinct, the expression is still used in Annang language to indicate anything that lacks substance.

Other examples are:

Annang English Characteristics

Simenti people	cement	culture-specific:	Annang were living in thatches.	
Rula formal	ruler	culture-specific:	Annang had no education	
Redio not civilized to make of radio	radio	Annang traditional society	use	was
Tifi	TV	same as above		
Moto	motor	same as above		
Loya	lawyer	Annang traditional	litigations in	society
never lawyer is			needed any so the term strange to culture	
Annang				
Telo	tailor	culture specific		
Borosi	police	The Annang police		
were		the Ekpo masquerades		
Pasinja	passenger	culture specific		
Masinja utom”	messenger	copying: “Asanga in Annang is an equivalent for messenger		
Akarak	clerk	culture specific		
Sinaab	schnapps	culture specific		
Ista	Easter	culture specific		
Windo	window	culture specific		
Majik	magic	culture specific		
Tai	tie	culture specific		
Fran	fry (V)	culture specific		
Bie	beer	culture specific		

These examples demonstrate a significant difference in the two cultures: Annang and English. They express ideas which are strange especially to the Annang traditional community. Since the Annang speakers could not perfectly produce these words in their proper phonology, they subjected the words to certain modifications: Same words but different spelling and phonology. This situation has been noted by Baker (1999:59-60), “If the cultural settings of the source and target languages are significantly different, there will be instances when the source text will contain collocations which convey what to the target reader would be unfamiliar association of ideas.”

Conclusion

Cross-linguistic Influence (CLI) covers a wide area including Foreignizing, literal translation, interlingual and intralingual transfers, interference, avoidance and borrowing.

Borrowing involves the transfer of constructions, words or morphological elements from one language to another. It is an essential process in linguistic productivity. As a social instrument, languages are never static. They keep expanding and developing as long as they

come in contact with other languages. In this sense, borrowing has always been a major source of language development, and has been a significant factor in the expansion of the Annang lexicon in particular and linguistic development generally.

Annang is spoken by about two million people in South-Eastern Nigeria. Some of its speakers are also scattered in the diaspora. Many English expressions have warmed their way into the Annang language out of many years of contact between English and Annang and in this way Annang language has benefitted much from English in its process of development. We discover that most of the expressions borrowed from English into Annang are culture-specific words. In other words, the Annang speaker makes use of these expressions in circumstances where he lacks equivalents in his language. Many culture-specific usages relate to the educational and religious cultures of Europe such as “rula”, “redio” etc. but on the other hand, the Annang speaker may borrow words of English for prestige reasons. For example, the word “messenger” is translated as “asanga-utom” but some Annang speakers prefer “masinja” to “asanga-utom”.

Generally, loan English words in Annang language demonstrate the differences in the culture of English and that of Annang. These words express ideas which are strange to the Annang traditional community. However, even though these words have been subjected to modifications in phonology and structure, they are basically semantically equivalent.

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