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Creating a Database on Verbal Borrowings

In the broader context of the loanword typology project at MPI EVA, and under the supervision of MARTIN HASPELMATH, I am working on a typology of verbal borrowing.

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 March 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. unknown	
11. secret language, ludling	
12. substrate to areal official language	
13. superstrate areal language	
14. forced bilingualism	
15. multilingual society	
16. diglossia	
17. language attrition	
18. religion, mission, cult	
19. cultural prestige	
20. 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"	M 3 - Light Verb Strategy
S 32 - Light verb "make"	
S 32 - 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

dasitaruγavet

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 yílmàq

I swim.PFT

‘I swam’

< *i-lmäq* 3m.PFT of *ēlmēq* ‘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 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 34

Carib < Guianese French Creole

pentiré poko man

paint busy.with 3SG.cop

‘he is painting’

< pentiré ‘to paint’

(RENAULT-LESCURE)

S 51

Ket < Russian

díriŋúyavet

d-iriŋ-u-k-a-bet

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

‘he signs it’

< Ket *iriŋ* ‘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.

References and Links:

Background Information:

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

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

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

Department of Linguistics, MPI EVA

The World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS)

MPI EVA Loanword Typology Project

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).

GRAVELLE, GILLES: *Morphosyntactic properties of Meyah word classes*. In: REESINK, GER P.: *Languages of the eastern Bird's Head*. Canberra: Australian Natl. Univ., 2002. (= Pacific Linguistics; 524). 109-180.

MORAVCSIK, EDITH (1975): *Borrowed verbs*. In: Wiener Linguistische Gazette 8 (1975), 3-30.

MORAVCSIK, EDITH (2003): *Borrowed Verbs*. Manuscript, 2003.

MUYSKEN, PETER: *Bilingual Speech. A Typology of Code-Mixing*. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2000.

RENAULT-LESCURE, ODILE: *Contacts de langues et réanalyse de certaines structures prédicatives en kali'na (langue caribe)*. Paper presented at the International Joint Conference of the SCL-SCPL-ACBLPE on Caribbean and Creole Languages; Curaçao, 11-15 August 2004.

VAJDA, EDWARD J.: *Ket Verb Morphology and its Yeniseic Origins*. Paper presented at MPI EVA; Leipzig, 2 February 2005.

WERNER, HEINRICH: *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Jenseit-Sprachen*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2002.

WICHMANN, SØREN (2004a): *Structural patterns of verb borrowing*. Paper presented at the workshop on loan word typology; Leipzig, 1-2 May 2004.

WICHMANN, SØREN (2004b): *Loan verbs in a typological perspective*. Paper presented at the seminar on contact linguistics, The Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen; København, 14 December 2004.

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APPENDIX

Field names and abbreviations used in the database overview:

Table/Field	Abbreviation	Explanation
confidence		degree of reliability; same as in the other LWT databases
x_ex_relex		cross-link to related examples
contact_info		information on the type and degree of language contact
reference		bibliographical reference for the source of the example
	biblio_brief	short bibliographical reference
	biblio_full	full bibliographical reference
pattern		the particular pattern of accommodating the borrowed form
x_pattern_subtype		cross-link of patterns to subtypes
subtypes		subtypes of accommodating borrowed forms
macro_type		higher-level type accommodating borrowed forms
metadata		the main table to which all data is linked
	ref_pages	bibliographical information: on what page is the example
	ref_item_number	bibliographical information: what number does the example have in the cited source?
	date	estimated or accounted date of borrowing
	type_notes	any information directly concerning the borrowing pattern
	raw_example_native	the example in orthographic or phone(ma)tic representation
	raw_example_translitr	the example transliterated (Latin/IPA) and hyphenated
	glossing	interlinear glossing of the example
	translation_en	English translation of the example
	donor_root	borrowed lexeme as found in the donor language
	donor_root_meaning	meaning of that form in the donor language
	reserve	additional field for information on the donor language form
	com_equal_lgs	consistency check disallowing borrowing from a language into itself
	remarks	any further (meta)information on the particular example
languages		table to access information on donor / recipient language
	name	name of the language as used in this database
	latitude_text	geographical position (point); segmented, for map generation
	latitude_num	
	longitude_text	
	longitude_num	
	wals_code	abbreviation used for this language in WALS
	location	geographical position (point) as one string
x_lg_country		cross-linking languages to the countries they are spoken in
countries		list of countries and territories
x_SIL_lg		cross-linking (wals) language info and ethnologue language info
	comment	indicates whether there are more varieties of that lg. in the database
prop	property	indicates “variety of”-relationship
ethnologue		
	SIL code	SIL (ethnologue) code of the language
	ethno name	SIL (ethnologue) name of the language
x_typological_data		cross-linking language and typological information
features		the 142 WALS features
	feature name	names of the features, as in WALS
feat_area	area name	typological area (lexicon, syntax, morphology etc)
feature_value		indicating which property a feature has in the given language
	feature value	numerical value (e.g. “5” for “no definite or indefinite article” in feature 38: <i>article</i>)
	description	description of the value
genera		linking every language to its genealogical relatives (e.g. <i>Meso-Philippine</i>) or to the non-genealogical classes of isolates, creoles, artificial languages
families		highest-level grouping e.g. <i>Austronesian</i>
subfamilies		intermediate-level grouping e.g. <i>Western Malayo-Polynesian</i>
macro_area		the six macro-regions of the world (Africa, Australia-New Guinea, Eurasia, North America, Southeast Asia and Oceania, South America)
transitivity		transitivity (itr., trans. ditrans.) of borrowed and original form
LW status		is the word a replacement, insertion, or synonym in the recipient lexicon?

