Affix borrowing and social setting

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Overview

• quantitative and qualitative study of affix borrowing
• argue that grammatical hybridization is
  – not (strongly) constrained by typological similarity
    between donor and recipient language: room for social context
  – not (strongly) constrained by prestige: prestige is not the only social factor for hybridization
• affix borrowing escapes conscious control of speakers, and thus also social regulations regarding language mixing

Typology and borrowability

• Is grammatical hybridization dependent on structural-typological features of the languages involved?
• “Borrowability, in a broad sense, is constrained by the morphological structuring of the languages in contact.” (Field 2002: 42)
• “highly congruent structures” favor transfer because a highly bound morpheme is “useless in an alien system unless there is a ready function for it” (Weinreich 1953: 33)
• “Direct borrowing of structural elements can occur only when the languages involved are typologically very similar” (Winford 2005: 387)
• Do typologically similar languages borrow more affixes?

A study on affix borrowing: data

• AfBo database (Seifart 2013) http://afbo.info
• a total of 657 borrowed affixes in 101 pairs of languages in which one languages has borrowed at least one affix from the other
• both inflectional and derivational affixes
• affixes that are attested on at least some native stems
• Used here 78 languages that borrowed between one and 50 affixes (Seifart 2014a)
• Extent of affix borrowing taken as a measure of hybridization
Affix borrowing: hybridization scores

- The mean number of borrowed affixes 6.5; median 4
- But borrowing 40 noun class markers is not as hybrid as borrowing noun class markers + plural makers + an augmentative + a dative case marker (Resigaro from Bora)
- The number of categories borrowed taken as hybridization score
- ranges from one to eight per language, mean number of categories per language 2.3; the median 2

Affix borrowing: similarity scores

- Structural similarity between donor and recipient languages is calculated from 136 WALS features (Dryer and Haspelmath 2011)
- Mean number of 43 features for individual languages pairs
- Similarity scores for language pairs as Hamming distances, i.e. the proportion of features that have the same feature
- range from 0.21 (i.e., roughly one fifth of features have the same value) for Sri Lanka Portuguese and Tamil, to 1.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient language</th>
<th>Donor language</th>
<th>Features compared</th>
<th>Struct. similarity</th>
<th>Borrowed affixes</th>
<th>Borrowed categories</th>
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### Results

![Graph showing number of borrowed affix categories as a function of structural similarity for 78 language pairs; the grey line indicates the (absence of) linear correlation.](image)

### Examples

- **Yucatec Maya** borrowed from typologically dissimilar Spanish (similarity score 0.33) only one affix (diminutive suffix *-ito*) (Chamoreau 2012: 84)
- **Copper Island Aleut** borrowed from Russian (equally dissimilar: 0.33) 15 affixes from four different categories: six present tense suffixes; seven past tense suffixes, one infinitive marker; one negative verbal prefix (Golovko & Vakhin 1990; Sekerina 1994).
- **Resígaro** borrowed from dissimilar Bora (0.38) 50 affixes belonging to six categories (Seifart 2012)
- **Chabacano** borrowed from dissimilar Visayan (0.40) eight affixes from six categories (Steinkrüger 2003)
Typological similarity and hybridization

• Structural-typological similarity plays at best a minor role in constraining borrowability of affixes
• Consistent with Thomason and Kaufmann (1988): sociolinguistic factors, not structural factors are the primary determinant of contact-induced change
• When speakers mix languages they will do so – under the appropriate circumstances – regardless of typological features of the languages involved.

Unconscious affixes: Mutual borrowing

• Hybrid formations may be first formed in the donor languages (as loanword + native affix), then borrowed back into the recipient language, e.g.
  – Middle English nouns with Anglo French affixes, e.g. lodman-āge ‘cost of pilotage’, first attested in Anglo French and only later in Middle English (Seifart 2014b)
  – Quechua nouns with Spanish affixes, e.g. warmin-ero ‘womanizer’, first in Spanish, only later in Quechua (Bakker & Hekking 2012:200)
  – Moroccan Arabic nouns with Moroccan Berber affixes, e.g. ta-kotbiya-t ‘profession/art of bookseller’ first formed in Moroccan Berber, then borrowed back into Moroccan Arabic (Zellou 2011)

Unconscious affixes: Prohibition of language mixing

• Cultural constraint against language mixing under heavy multilingualism in North West Amazonian exogamy and other interethnic exchange
• No (or few) lexical stems borrowed, but affixes borrowed:
  – Eastern Tukanoan → Tariana (sim. 0.58/3 affixes from 1 category) (Aikhenvald 2012)
  – Bora → Resigaro (sim. 0.38/50 affixes from 6 categories) (Seifart 2012)

Prestige

• Prestige → non-prestige language
  – Anglo French → Middle English (0.63 sim./8 affixes from 2 categories)
  – Turkish → Albanian (0.33 sim./6 affixes from 2 categories)
  – Spanish → Quechua (4 affixes)
  – ...
• Non-prestige → prestige language
  – Moroccan Berber → Moroccan Arabic (0.75 sim./1 affix)
  – Tamil → Sri Lanka Portuguese (0.21 sim./2 affixes from 2 categories)
  – Visayan → Chabacano (0.40 sim./8 affixes from 6 categories)
Conclusion

- grammatical hybridization is not (strongly) constrained by typology: importance of social factors
- grammatical hybridization is not (strongly) constrained by prestige: prestige is not the only social factor
- grammatical hybridization escapes conscious control of speakers, and thus also social regulations regarding language mixing, including prestige and others

References


SEIFART, FRANK. 2014b. Direct and indirect affix borrowing. Forthcoming in Language.


