1 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE CONTACT

**transfer** = ‘the replication of some feature (vocabulary item, linguistic structure etc.) in one language on the model of another language’

**borrowing** = ‘the incorporation of foreign features into a group’s native language by speakers of that language: the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features’ (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 37)

  - the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features
  - begins with borrowed words (no bilingualism required)
  - may in the long term extend to structural features if there is extensive bilingualism e.g. adoption of loan phonemes
  - extensive structural borrowing requires centuries of contact or is impossible
  - ‘scales of borrowing’ have been proposed

Japanese has borrowed many English words (e.g. *geemu setto* < *game and set*, *sarada* < *salad*, *sangurasu* < *sunglasses*, *songu* < *song*) but there is virtually no structural impact at all.

**imposition** =

  - learners carry over some features from the native language to their target language
  - they fail to learn some features of the target language (learners’ errors)
  - integration of the learners and native speakers may result in a compromise amalgam of the learner variety and the native variety (accommodation)
  - this often happens in situations of **language shift**, but language shift is not necessary
  - begins with phonology and syntax e.g. adoption of retroflex consonants from Dravidian into Indic languages of India, despite few loans from Dravidian into Indic
  - the target language may adopt few words from the shifting speakers’ language
  - shift may be complete in a generation and interference is stronger the quicker the shift takes place

**Example of imposition**

German-speaking Austrian students showed impositions in their English (Nemser 1991)

  - German lexical items e.g. *grammatik* for *grammar*, *brills* for *glasses*
  - imposed German meanings on English words phonologically similar to a German word e.g. using *meagre* to mean ‘thin’ (German *mager* ‘thin’) and *guilty* to mean ‘valid’ (German *gültig* ‘valid’)
  - loan translations based on German models e.g. *ill-car* for *ambulance* (German *Krankenwagen*) and *alp-dream* for *nightmare* (German *Alptraum*)
  - derived new words on German patterns e.g. *nervosity* (German *Nervosität*), *respectless* (German *respektlos*) and *unguilty* (German *unschuldig*)
  - imposed German argument structure on English verbs e.g.
(1) Explain me something. (German Erklära mir was.)
(2) You just finished to eat. (German Du hast gerade aufgehört zu essen.)
(3) I would suggest him to go. (German Ich empfehle ihm zu gehen.)

- imposed German word order on L2 English:

(4) All of a sudden will be coming too much [ketchup] out.
(5) She took a woman away her husband.
(6) Went you home?

Agentivity
Van Coetsem (1988, 2000) and Winford (2005): ‘borrowing’ and ‘interference’ are results not processes; the relevant process distinction is between:
- recipient-language agentivity (borrowing)
- source-language agentivity (interference)

A related important distinction is between social and linguistic (psychological) dominance:
- a language is socially dominant in a community if it is the prestige language e.g. used in formal settings
- a language is psycholinguistically dominant in an individual is more proficient in that language (linked, but not straightforwardly, to whether it is that individual’s first language (L1) or second language (L2))
- speakers preserve the more stable components (phonology and grammar) of the language in which they are most proficient, while changing the less stable components (lexicon)
- this explains why borrowing is mostly lexical, and imposition is mostly grammatical

Mutual influence
Borrowing and shift-induced interference may occur at the same time e.g. Spanish–Quechua contact in Peru:

- Quechua borrows more lexicon and less structure from Spanish (borrowing)
- Spanish borrows less lexicon and more structure from Quechua (interference)

Asia Minor Greek: extensive borrowing or reversal with imposition?
Language dominance is not the same as language maintenance: a language may be maintained even though many of its speakers have adopted another language as their primary language. These speakers may cause change in the maintained language, and this change involves source-language agentivity (Winford 2005).

- Asia Minor Greek shows extreme structural changes under the influence of Turkish
- Turkish is the socially dominant external language
- the ancestral language (Greek) was maintained (to a degree)
- generally assumed that this is borrowing (Thomason and Kaufman say level 5 borrowing) because the Turks did not shift to speaking Greek, i.e. it is assumed that changes in maintained languages must be due to borrowing
- however, many bilinguals were probably Turkish-dominant i.e. both types of agentivity occurred: Greek-dominant bilinguals implemented recipient language agentivity, while Turkish-dominant bilinguals (children?) implemented source-
language agentivity. This is mostly imposition (adaptation of Greek to Turkish), not borrowing.

Reversals in dominance relations occur when speakers gradually lose competence in their ancestral language. This allows Asia Minor Greek to be united with cases of interference through shift (e.g. Irish English).

**Some possible scenarios**

- formation of pidgins and creoles
- linguistic areas / areal features / Sprachbund phenomena e.g. Balkans, India
- language death e.g. East Sutherland Gaelic, Dyirbal
- immigrant languages e.g. US Yiddish
- formation of new dialects (e.g. New Zealand English), cf. earlier lectures

**2 STAGES OF BORROWING (THOMASON & KAUFMAN 1988)**

**Level 1. Casual contact**

- lexical borrowing without widespread bilingualism e.g. Modern English loans from Modern French like ballet, pâté
- lexical borrowing into superordinate groups from subordinate populations e.g. English skunk and wigwam from Algonquian.

NB loans are assimilated phonologically

**English** flannel \([\text{flænl}] < W. (g)\text{wlanen} [\text{wlanen}]\)

**English** croissant \([\text{kwæsɒnt}] < \text{Fr. croissant} [\text{kʁwaʁɛ̃}]\)

**Level 2. Slightly more intense contact: slight structural borrowing**

loan of complementisers

appearance of new phonemes in loanwords only e.g. English /ʒ/ mostly in French loans like beige and rouge

minor syntactic features in new functions

- slight structural borrowing through the written medium only e.g. Latin influence on Standard English, or Classical Arabic influence on Turkic languages.
- or through bilingualism e.g. Spanish influence on Huastec: loan of conjunctions por ‘but’ etc., and loan on /d g/ in loanwords only

**Level 3. More intense contact: slightly more structural borrowing**

loan of prepositions

affixes extracted from borrowed words applied to native vocabulary

inflectional affixes limited to borrowed words e.g. -i in Latin loans

possibility of borrowing pronouns and low numerals

phonemicisation of previous allophones even in native vocabulary

borrowing stress and phonotactic rules in loanwords

**Level 4. Strong cultural pressure: moderate structural borrowing**

new distinctive features in native vocabulary

loss of contrasts

new syllabic structure constraints even in native vocabulary

extensive word order changes e.g. Semitic language Tigre has changed from verb-subject-object (VSO) word order to subject-object-verb (SOV) under the influence of neighbouring Cushitic languages

borrowed affixes and categories applied to native words e.g. English -able/-ible in loans (legible, edible) but then applied to native words like readable and eatable.
German influence on some Romansh dialects in Switzerland: introduction of adjective–noun word order, loss of adjective agreement on predicative adjectives

**Level 5. Very strong cultural pressure: heavy structural borrowing**
new morphophonemic rules, subphonemic rules, loss of rules and contrasts, changes in word structure rules, more extensive changes in syntax e.g. development of ergativity).

Sociolinguistic situations of long-term intense cultural pressure in a context of resistance to total cultural assimilation e.g. Asia Minor Greek (see Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 215–22) has borrowed vowel harmony from Turkish, uses Turkish inflections, has replaced synthetic with agglutinative morphology, uses Turkish genitive-noun word order.

**READING**


