

# HISTORICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL VIEWS ON LANGUAGE BORROWING

## Majlinda Ismaili Mahmudi

English Language Teacher, "Rexhë Rushit Zajazi", Kërçovë.

Email: [Majlinda\\_Ismaili@yahoo.com](mailto:Majlinda_Ismaili@yahoo.com)

## Rilind Mahmudi

Teaching Assistant, "Mother Teresa" University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Skopje.

Email: [Rilind.Mahmudi@Unt.Edu.Mk](mailto:Rilind.Mahmudi@Unt.Edu.Mk)

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### ABSTRACT

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Languages are dynamic and they change in order to accomplish their users' needs. Language change is a synchronic and diachronic process. From historical point of view, languages have always borrowed words from others languages and this is due to the language contact or other sociolinguistic circumstances and factors such as the sociolinguistic status of their speakers, their social prestige, the need to fulfill lexical gaps, the continuous scientific inventions and others. By using foreign words, speakers often feel more confident and unconsciously try to show their modern and updated version of themselves. This attitude leads to the borrowing of those words, and by this, the process of language change is always present. One way to observe language change is by revealing the main factors that make speakers borrow words. Nowadays, as a result of the development of modern technology, Albanian language is largely influenced by English language. Many linguists have tried to identify the main reasons why speakers borrow words. They have also tried to find ways how to prevent speakers from borrowing unnecessary words, actually words that have their synonymous form in the receiving language and to enforce speakers and the language institutions in creating new words with their own language means. The historical approach towards language borrowings and their influence in language change is very important as it precedes the further development of languages in general.

**Keywords:** Language borrowing, factors, methods, language change, Albanian language, Anglicisms.

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### Introduction

Many linguists have studied different situations, especially situations of languages in contact that lead to language borrowing. Historical linguistics is a scientific discipline that deals with the development of particular languages from one to another period of time. The term historical linguistics is also used to refer to comparative-historical linguistics, or more specifically to the comparative study of related languages for which the term genetic linguistics is also used.

Although, as a special discipline, historical linguistics is separated from philology, a historical scholar must not necessarily rely on written documents or texts to rebuild historical differences of languages. What is needed is the analysis of individuals' languages through the so-called comparative method. This method for the first time is thought to have been used by Sir William Jones in a lecture on the systematic linkage (lexicon and grammar) between Sanskrit and the other well-known languages, Latin and Greek. In addition to that, German missionary Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle has made a great contribution to the establishment and development of historical linguistics, especially with the publication of the volume *Polyglotta Africana* in 1854. Koelle in his work included 300 words from 156 African languages by comparing the lexicon, grammar and simple sentences of these languages. What he verified was that these languages had phonological similarities, although not all of them were genetically related to each other. This phonological similarity between non-genetic languages in most cases was coincidental. Apart from coincidence, one of the reasons why languages were to show similarity was the use of sounds or phonemes that show meaning (sound symbolism). This category included the onomatopoeic words whose form/meaning is motivated, so it is not arbitrary. These include words like 'mama' or 'papa' in English and their parallels in other languages such as Swahili 'mama' or 'baba,' including the Albanian language. The last reason for these languages to show similarities, especially in terms of cultural terms, and considered as a reason for this study is the *linguistic borrowing*<sup>1</sup>.

Apart from the contribution of the aforementioned linguists, among the founders of the comparative method can be mentioned R. Rasku, F. Bopi, J. Grimi, etc. According to the Albanian linguist Shezai Rrokaj, the comparative method deals with the comparison of languages within a branch, between branches, until they find their common tree, but the comparison is also applied to languages that do not belong to a branch or a family, but different historical and geographical circumstances condition the contact between them<sup>2</sup>.

### Language Borrowing

Eqrem Cabej, one of the most prominent Albanian linguists, with the publication of many studies can be considered an expert of language, linguistics, literature and ethnology<sup>3</sup>. His contribution to the historical study of the Albanian language as well as the Albanian relationship with foreign language borrowing could be noticed especially at the time when Albanian language was assigned as a separate language in the Indo-

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<sup>1</sup> Dimmendaal G. J. *Historical Linguistics and the Comparative Study of African Languages* John Benjamins Publishing Company 2011, p. 3-7.

<sup>2</sup> Rrokaj Sh. *Strukturalizmi klasik në gjuhësi* ILAR Tiranë, 2007, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eqrem\\_%C3%87abej](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eqrem_%C3%87abej), Retrieved on: 11.08.2017.

European family. In his volume "Etymological studies in the field of Albanian language," by following the evolution of Albanian words in space and in time, he was seeking to separate inherited words from language borrowings. As a result of his particular method of work by explaining first the place words occupy in the Albanian lexical system and then by comparing them with the words of other Indo-European languages (and not vice versa), he succeeded in confirming the inherited (Illyrian) character of several hundred main Albanian words that foreign Albanian linguists had so far considered linguistic borrowings<sup>4</sup>.

In addition to comparative linguistics, another scientific discipline that deals with the issue of language borrowing is the contact linguistics. This discipline deals with critical research of grammatical structures when bilingual speakers use two or more languages in a single sentence. The linguist Myers-Scotton analyzes contact phenomena such as lexical borrowing, convergence, language loss, mixed languages, and creole formation, but specifically deals with code-switching<sup>5</sup>.

One of the most noticeable effects that appear in languages in contact or in bilingual situations is the borrowing of lexical elements. One of the sociolinguistic characteristics of borrowing is that in most cases they are one-way, i.e., even lower-prestigious language speakers borrow words from a higher prestige language. Hence, a psycholinguistic feature that separates borrowings from code-switching is that not all speakers using borrowed forms need to be bilingual<sup>6</sup>.

Myers-Scotto relies on the views of Weinreich who used the term interference, not borrowing, to refer to the phenomenon of reciprocal lexical influence between the languages in contact. According to him, interference is a general term referring to the phenomenon of contact and the effects of the lexicon, so he speaks of a vocabulary that affects or 'interferes' with another vocabulary<sup>7</sup>.

According to Ferdinand de Saussure, who is considered a representative of structuralists, the objects of study of linguistics are the internal uses of the language system, while external elements, such as the social use of the language, are beyond the scope of this field of study. The study of language borrowing is an example of an

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<sup>4</sup> Çabej N. R. *Kontributi madhor i Eqrem Çabej* Klan Kosova 2016

<http://klankosova.tv/kontributi-madhor-i-eqrem-cabej/>, Retrievedon: 11.08.2017.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198299530.001.0001/acprof-9780198299530>, OxfordUniversityPressScholarshipOnline, Retrievedon: 06.06.2017.

<sup>6</sup> Myers-Scotton C. *ContactLinguistics: Bilingual Encounters and Grammatical Outcomes*, Oxford University Press 2002, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 234 (Cited: Weinreich U. (1967) *Languages in Contact: Findings and problems*. London, the Hague, Paris: Mouton (originally published in 1953 in New York), p. 47).

external linguistic phenomenon that is important in the historical study of language, but not in a language system. Therefore, a foreign word is not considered as such when studied within the system as it exists only through its links and through countering with the words that are related to it<sup>8</sup>.

In the synchronic approach, Saussure, wanting to favor the purity of the language system, argues that borrowings should not be considered as such when fully integrated into the system and as such do not differ from the other linguistic signs along which they stand (i.e., just like other linguistic signs, borrowed elements have two sides, the signifier (the expression) and the signified (the concept) as well as two basic features: arbitrariness and linearity<sup>9</sup>). However, in the diachronic approach, the assimilation of a foreign phoneme appears to have little or no systematic connection to the affected zones. The rules of change that display a phoneme during the evolution of a language are disrupted when that change passes to the other language, due to the fact that over time the foreign phoneme is affected in time and space. From Jakobson's point of view on language borrowing, any language borrowing that enters the system of a language must necessarily correspond to the need for prior submission to the system. He comes to this conclusion after analyzing the language situation before the changes caused by the borrowings and after analyzing the spread of the borrowings across the system<sup>10</sup>.

One of the main referring points on language borrowing is the "The analysis of linguistic borrowings" by Einar Haugen. In this volume he summarized all earlier studies on borrowings and summarized them on the basis of previous research. His purpose was to define the terminology used in the linguistic analysis of borrowings and to raise some hypotheses about the borrowing process. The first hypothesis was that the use of words from two different languages is not a coincidence, but the speaker may either pass from one language to another without a problem, or during conversation can only use one word, phrase or sentence from another language. For this type of language use he uses the term code switching. The second hypothesis was that the resulting language is not hybrid compared with the pure language, but languages borrow words, and attempts to clear the language from foreign elements are wrong. And the third hypothesis was that the term "borrowing" itself is a wrong term because it is a process that appears without the permission of the lender and

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<sup>8</sup>Goebel H. Nelde H. P. Stary Z. & Woelck W. *Kontaktlinguistik/Contact Linguistics/Linguistique de contact* Walter de Gruyter 1996, p. 542 (Cited: de Saussure Ferdinand (1915): *A course in general linguistics*. Bally, C./Sechehaye, A. (Eds.) Wade Baskin, trans. New York, 1959, p. 22).

<sup>9</sup>Rrokaj Sh. *Strukturalizmi klasik në gjuhësi ILAR* Tiranë, 2007, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup>Galan F. W. *Historic Structures: The Prague School Project, 1928-1946* University of Texas press 1985, p. 23 (Cited: Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Cours de linguistique générale* (1915). Edited by T. de Mauro. Paris: Payot & Jakobson p. 107).

does not need to be returned. Haugen defines borrowings as a "reproduction of forms in a language found in another language". Borrowings, according to him, are considered models (actually, forms that include lexemes, morphemes, phonemes and syntactical structures that can be borrowed<sup>11</sup>). In addition, he has also proposed other basic terms such as: foreign words, hybrid words, calques, semantic borrowings, and so on. According to him, language borrowing should be studied within language systems. As for the grammar of foreign words, according to Haugen, there is a tendency to mostly borrow nouns or verbs<sup>12</sup>. With the term linguistic borrowing, Haugen does not exclude cases when speakers of a language insert/spread elements from their language into another language other than their native language. This process is known as imposition or retention<sup>13</sup>.

Since 1881, Whitney has presented the degree of appropriateness of borrowings. According to him, the first place is occupied by nouns. Nouns are followed by other parts of speech, and in the end prefixes, suffixes, inflections and sounds<sup>14</sup>. Whitney's volume is considered as an objection to the axiom according to which there are not and there cannot exist languages with mixed grammar. According to him, mixed grammars exist at least in specific socio-historical circumstances and in cases of languages in contact. Moreover, Whitney mentions the possibility of general grammatical incompatibility between the giver and the receiving language that may result in some borrowed elements and in various borrowing verbal accommodation techniques. According to him, foreign verbs enter the language as a language element rather than a verb, and then in the receiving language they transform into verbs. Based on Whitney's points of view, the linguist Paul also elaborated lexical loans in 1920, with a special emphasis on their phonological adaptation.

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<sup>11</sup> Wohlgemuth J. *A Typology of Verbal Borrowings* Mouton De Gruyter 2009, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Hoffer B. L. *Language Borrowing and Language Diffusion: an Overview* Intercultural Communication Studies - Trinity University 2002, p. 5 (Cited: Haugen, Einar (1950): "The analysis of linguistic borrowing." In: *Language* 26, p. 212-215).

<sup>13</sup> Wohlgemuth J. *A Typology of Verbal Borrowings* Mouton De Gruyter 2009, p. 52 (Cited: Haugen, Einar (1950): "The analysis of linguistic borrowing." In: *Language* 26, p. 212).

<sup>14</sup> Hoffer B. L. *Language Borrowing and Language Diffusion: an Overview* Intercultural Communication Studies - Trinity University 2002, p. 11 (Cited: Whitney W. D. 1881 *On Mixture in Language*. In: *Transactions of the American Philological Association for 1881* [1971:184]).

According to him, different situations of language contact lead to varying degrees of borrowing of words, and he adds that the possibility of word borrowing occurs only in bilingual situations<sup>15</sup>.

In addition to the Prague Linguistic Circle linguists, the American structuralist Edward Sapir in his book 'Language' emphasizes the importance of language contact, which among others mentions English language with a large number of words and productive language elements borrowed from French (-ess in the word 'princess', -ard in the word 'drunkard', -ty in the word 'royalty'), and not borrowings in the opposite direction, so he sees no reciprocity of linguistic borrowings. According to him, the way a language reacts to foreign words by accepting, translating or rejecting them can reveal its formal tendencies as well as the psychological response of speakers who use it<sup>16</sup>.

In addition to Sapir, Bloomfield in his volume 'Language' deals with language borrowings in three chapters, distinguishing three types of borrowings: cultural, intimate and dialect borrowings. Cultural borrowing includes borrowed words together with concepts, things or new ideas (*club, fashion, golf*); intimate borrowing means the use of two or more languages in the same geographic area or in a similar political community where the so-called "high" language becomes a source of borrowing for a language with a lower sociolinguistic status (*beef, pork* from French); and dialect borrowing includes the process that takes place within a language where the words are borrowed from the standard language in dialects and vice versa, or the dialects can borrow words from each other (including phonetic changes, e.g. the word 'father' begins to be pronounced with 'a' in a dialect where speakers pronounce it with 'e')<sup>17</sup>.

According to Bloomfield, the degree with which we can control another language affects the degree of borrowing. Thus, people who can speak language well can use words from that language, and on the other hand, people who can read forms of foreign words without learning them can use foreign orthography in writing native

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<sup>15</sup> Wohlgemuth J. *A Typology of Verbal Borrowings* Mouton De Gruyter 2009, p. 11 (Cited: Whitney W. D. 1881 [1971: 185] *On Mixture in Language*. In: Transactions of the American Philological Association for 1881 & Paul H. (1920) *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte*. [5th edn]. Tübingen: Niemeyer. [repr. 1968: 393]).

<sup>16</sup> Hoffer B. L. *Language Borrowing and Language Diffusion: an Overview* Intercultural Communication Studies - Trinity University 2002, p. 3 (Cited: Sapir E. *Language* Cambridge University press, 1921, p. 206).

<sup>17</sup> Sujoldzic A. *Linguistic Anthropology* Eolss Publishers 2009, page 55 (Cited: Sapir E. *Language* Cambridge University press, 1921, p. 206 & Bloomfield L. *Language* Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited - Delhi 1935, p. 444-476).

language terms. He talks about borrowed forms and their integration into the syntax and in the inflective system of the native language. According to him, foreign prefixes and suffixes may become productive in the receiving language, such as the suffix of Latin-French origin *-able* in the English words *agreeable, drinkable*<sup>18</sup>, etc.

### **Anglicisms in Albanian language**

In the diachronic plane, the Albanian language has always been influenced by other languages due to different historical circumstances through which it has passed. However, the Albanian language has not changed in its core because what is considered foreign to it is in most cases only lexical elements which are usually borrowed to fill the lexical gaps and as such have had enriching value for the language. In the synchronous plane, when analyzing the language as to the origin of words, it is noticed that the words with foreign origin that have historically penetrated have been adapted very well and have created word families that they are not already considered or felt foreign.

However, in recent times, especially due to the rapid development of technology, there is an increased use of foreign words from English language. These words become necessary since in Albanian language there are no effective mechanisms for replacing them with words created by the Albanian corpus. Furthermore, their inadequate use seems to pose a threat to Albanian language and such cases should be avoided.

### **Conclusion**

While the use of Anglicisms is getting more and more frequent, it is also important to take preventive measures for their non-use and to avoid using them inadequately and unnecessarily (in situations when there are Albanian equivalents such *kaltër-blue, përzierje-mix, bashkësi-community, përbindësh-monster, tronditës-shocking, etc.*) at least by academics, intellectuals, politicians, journalists, etc., who need to be example to other people. Additionally, national awareness should be increased that the use of foreign words does not make you more educated or academic, but rather the underestimation of the Albanian language and the overestimation of the foreign language harms the language and is a sign for linguists to continuously work on the elaboration and standardization of the language and the vocabulary and the exclusion of unnecessary borrowings that may result in changing the structure of the language.

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<sup>18</sup>Hoffer B. L. *Language Borrowing and Language Diffusion: an Overview* Intercultural Communication Studies - Trinity University 2002, p. 4 (Cited: Bloomfield L. *Language* Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited – Delhi 1935, p. 454).

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