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The effect of language planning on lexical borrowing

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ABSTRACT

Everything in this universe is perpetually in a state of change. In fact, we live in fluctuating world, nothing stays still. Language like everything else joins in this general flux. These changes may occur in all aspects of a language: in pronunciation, in syntax and in lexicon. Of these three areas lexical changes are the most noticeable and may be observed almost daily. An important type of lexical change in any language is lexical borrowing. This research intended to investigate whether these new substitute words have been accepted by educated people or not. The research also intended to see whether there is any difference among students of Persian, English and Arabic literature in their familiarity with and use of these new words or not. In so doing, three groups of educated students at the university of Isfahan participated in the study. Each group consisted of 30 male students, studying English, Persian, and Arabic literature. A list of 163 substituted words for the borrowed foreign words presented to them. They were asked to mark the word which they use more frequently in spoken and written form of language to see which form, the borrowed form or the substituted form, is used more frequently and also by which group. The results show that the borrowed words are used more frequently than substituted words by all of the three groups. It is suggested that the language planners include the substitute words in high school books to get more fruitful results and we hope it finds its place among our people very soon!

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Introduction

The ever whirling wheel. *The inevitability of change*: everything in this universe is perpetually in a state of change. In fact, we live in a *fluctuating* world, nothing stays still. Language like everything else joins in this general flux. As the German philosopher-linguist Wilhem Von Humboldt noted in 1836: "There can never be a moment of true standstill in language, just as little as in the ceaseless flaming thought of men. By nature it is a continuous process of development. Language, like everything else, gradually transforms itself over the centuries. As the famous Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure noted: "Time changes all things: there is no reason why language should escape this universal law." All languages change over a period of time, often so gradually that speakers are not even aware of the change until a century or more has passed. Changes may occur in all aspects of a language: in pronunciation, in syntax and in lexicon. Of these three areas lexical changes are the most noticeable and may be observed almost daily. An important type of lexical change in any language is borrowing. When a language borrows a word, the new word is pronounced according to the sound system of the language to which it is being added. A special type of borrowing is described as loan translation in which there is a direct translation of the elements of the word into the borrowing language.

Recently many terms relating to western technology and culture have become part of the vocabulary of world language. The history of Persian language indicates that because of semantic translation and word by word translation a large number of these foreign words have entered the Persian language. Also some of these words have become part of the

vocabulary of our language as a result of some political, social and economical issues. Many attempts have been made by language planners to exclude these words from our lexicons. The Language Academy in Iran has introduced new Persian words to be substituted for borrowed words, in order to protect Persian literature from foreign elements. I gathered about 164 substituted new words which are introduced by Language Academy until 1380.

How linguists study changes in progress? Until recently, the majority of linguists were convinced that language change was unobservable. A popular assumption was that language change was a continuous but very slow process, like the rotation of the earth, or the opening of flowers. It happened so slowly and over so many decades that it was quite impossible to detect its occurrence. You could only look at it beforehand and afterwards.

Purpose of the Study

This research is intended to investigate whether these new substituted words have been accepted by educated people and if yes, what percentage of these new words is used by educated people in spoken and written form of the language. The research is also intended to see whether students of Persian literature are more familiar with these new words and use them more frequently than students of English or Arabic literature or not.

Research Questions

As it was mentioned earlier, Persian Language Academy has attempted to substitute new words for the borrowed words from other languages. The study aims to find whether educated people are even familiar with these new words and if yes what percentage of these words are used more frequently. Also it aims

to see if there is any difference among students of Persian, English and Arabic literature in their familiarity with and use of these new words.

Research Hypothesis

Regarding the first question it is hypothesized that the educated people are familiar with a low percentage of these substituted new words. And the hypothesis regarding the second question is that there is significant difference among students of Persian, English and Arabic literature in their use and familiarity with these substituted words. Because of their major, my hypothesis is that students of English literature have a low frequency of using substituted words, students of Arabic literature have a high frequency of using substituted words, and students of Persian Literature have the same frequency for both borrowed and substituted words.

Literature Review

Borrowing

By definition, when speakers imitate a word from a foreign language and, at least partly, adapt it in sound or grammar to their native language, the process is called "loan word" or "borrowing". In fact, one of the most common sources of new words in any language is borrowing, the process by which a word or phrase is taken from one language and then is used in another language. When borrowing is a single word it is called a "loan word". If a borrowed word or phrase is widely used, most speakers pronounce it according to the sound system of their own language. Languages do not borrow words from one another in a haphazard way but rather under particular conditions. Sometimes to trace the history of linguistic borrowing is to trace the history of people, where they settled, whom they conquered and who conquered them and the development of society. Sometimes the existence of foreign words in the language is the result of some historical, political, and social factors. All in all, the history of a loan word may be quite complex, because such words may have come to a language not directly, but via another language or two. According to Crystal (1995: 285), "loan words have, as it were, a life of their own that cuts across the boundaries between languages."

There are several different factors which result in the existence and development of some foreign words in a language. Sometimes it is the result of horridly word-by-word translation. The increasing developments in technology and science require the translation of these texts into other language. In most of the cases the translators try to apply a semantic, word by word translation in translating scientific texts and then forms tend to be used frequently in common speech.

In some cases those who travel foreign countries for education and occupation purposes, are major sources of borrowing. They use the words which have been used in those countries and find it prestigious to use them in their common speech. Most of the time other people use these words in their language and in this way they try to be more prestigious and to be identified with higher class people. Sometimes this phenomenon has occupational basis. The communication and interaction with foreigners in industrial centers such as factories is one of the important factors in arrival of foreign words in our language. The cooperation and co-existence of Iranian employees and foreign engineers and technicians in the past, resulted in the arrival of new words in our language. Language contact has various consequences for semantic change as the restriction of native words by loan words or transfer of meaning.

Regarding path of borrowing, three types of contact can be distinguished. First, the coexistences of two spoken languages in mixed speech communities and border regions, the transferred items will normally be integrated. Second, distance contact, for example, the import of foreign goods and other names, transfer can happen over great distance in written and spoken form. Third, borrowing from book languages, in which transfers are notably based on written forms and not well integrated.

In other words, we can say there are four important characteristics of borrowing. First, detachable elements are the most easily and commonly take over- that is, elements which are easily detached from the donor language and which will not affect the structure of the borrowing language. An obvious example of this is the ease with which items of vocabulary make their way from language to language. Particularly if the words have some type of prestige. A second characteristic is that adopted items tend to be changed to fit in with the structure of the borrower's language, though the borrower is only occasionally aware of the distortion imposed. The third one is that a language tends to select for borrowing those aspects of the donor language which superficially correspond fairly closely to aspects already in its own. Where France adjoins Germany we find that French has adopted certain German syntactic construction. A final characteristic has been called the "*minimal adjustment*" tendency - the borrowing language makes only very small adjustments to the structure of its language at any one time.

All in all, so many different factors cause changing a language, especially borrowing. As mentioned before, traveling to other countries, occupation, technology, fashion and random fluctuation, need and function are the main causes. We can't neglect that language contact and therefore borrowing relies on bilingualism so that one of the major motivation for borrowing is essentially social and depends on perception of prestige.

Language Planning

According to Weinstein (1980, P.56), "language planning is a government authorized, long term, sustained, and conscious effort to alter a language's function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problem." In other words, language planning is an attempt to interfere deliberately with a language or one of its varieties.

Language planning is usually done by government or government agency, concerning choice of national or official languages, ways of spreading the use of a language, spelling reforms, the addition of new words to the language and other language problems. Through language planning, an official language policy is established and implemented. It is a government authorized and conscious effort to alter a language form or function in a society for the purpose of solving language problems. Language planning is a recent phenomenon in sociolinguistics, which attempts to interfere with a language or one of its varieties. It was proposed by Haugen and Woinroich in 1954 and can be in short - range, medium- range and long-rang forms.

Fishman believes in macro and micro- language. By micro-language he refers to the improvement within the same language, ie, the changes inside the language. For example, the attempts in making the language better and more effective. By macro- language planning he refers to the improvement of different language in a society. For example, the attempt that is done to select a language as a standard one. Therefore the activity of Persian language Academy in this regard is a kind of

micro language planning that attempts to refine Persian Language from borrowed words.

Wardhaugh (1986) defines language planning as an attempt to interfere deliberately with a language or one of its varieties and makes a distinction between status and corpus planning. Status planning changes the function of a language or a variety of it and the rights of those who use it. These changes are nearly always very slow and often leave strong residual feelings. On the other hand corpus planning seeks to develop a variety of a language to standardize it. So it may involve such matters as the development of orthography, new sources of vocabulary, etc in a way that language may extend its use into areas as government, education and trade. Corpus planning is a deliberate restructuring of a language often by government authorities. This may be done by giving it an increased range of vocabulary, new grammatical structures and sometimes new writing system. For example, in Malaysia where Bahasa Malaysia has become the national language, attempts have been made to construct new vocabulary in areas such as business, education and research. Other similar efforts have been made for Swahili in East Africa.

In some cases language planning is done in order to purify language from foreign words. Syntax doesn't change for years but the change is in the words which are borrowed from other languages. Borrowing may be in the form of loan translation, loan interpretation and extension of meaning and in some cases it results in the change in syntax and other cases. Many words disappear because the criteria of coining words disappear and they may appear because the criteria for coining appear. But in the case of purifying the Language, language Academic try to not only purify language from foreign words but also to substitute new words for the borrowed ones. In fact, they try to make the language independence and self-reliance.

Language Academies were formed in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These Language Academies do the language planning. Persian Language Academy was established in 1360 and one of its goal has been to purify language from foreign words. It has introduced some new words to be substituted for the borrowed ones. One of the important steps in language planning is to evaluate its work and see to what extent it has been successful in gaining its objectives.

Methodology

Subjects

Three groups of students who were either Junior or senior at Isfahan University participated in the experiment. They were all men in order to control the sex variable. One group consisted of 30 male students, studying English Literature and the second group consisted of 30 male students, studying Persian Literature and the third group was 30 male students, studying Arabic Literature.

Materials

The material of this study was questioners consisting of the words that Persian Language Academic have substituted for the borrowed words, as well as equal borrowed words. The total number of words was 163 words which presented to subjects one by one. They were asked to mark the words which they use more frequently in their own speech or writing and also were asked to draw a line under the substituted words which they encountered for the first time and it was unfamiliar and odd them.

Procedures

As was mentioned earlier, three groups of educated students at the University of Isfahan participated in the study. One group

consisted of 30 male students, studying English literature, the second group was students of Persian literature, and the third group was students of Arabic literature at the same university. Attempts were made to control other factors as sex, education and place of study. A list of 163 substituted words for the borrowed foreign words presented to them. They were asked to mark the word which they use more frequently in spoken and written form of language to see which form, the borrowed form or the substituted form, is used more frequently. Also they were asked to draw a line under the substituted word which they encountered for the first time and it was unfamiliar, odd and strange for them, to evaluate Language Academy work in inventing these new words.

Data Analysis

For analyzing the data, the frequency of each word, that is the number of times that the word selected by the subjects as more frequent used word in their speech and writing, and also the percentage of this occurrence was calculated.

Results

As mentioned earlier the first hypothesis was that the educated people are familiar with a low percentage of these substituted words. And if we want to rank those three groups according to their frequency, English group were supposed to have the highest frequency, then Persian group and after that Arabic group. The results are presented in the following tables. As the results show most of the borrowed words are used more frequently than substituted words by all of the students of English, Persian, and Arabic literature. But for the second hypothesis, as it was supposed English group has the highest frequency but Arabic group doesn't have the lowest frequency. A more precise analysis of results indicates that the students of English literature use only 20% of the substituted words more frequently in their use of language and about 74% of the borrowed words. On the other hand, the students of Persian literature use about 33% of the substituted words more frequently in their use of language and about 60% of the borrowed words. And finally the students of Arabic literature use about 30.5% of the substituted words and about 67% of the borrowed words.

About the odd and unfamiliar words, the results of the study indicated that approximately 21.5% of the substituted words is unfamiliar and odd for English group, 10% of these words is odd for Persian group and 4.5% is unfamiliar for Arabic group. Comparing these results, it is clear that although these differences are not wide but there is still some differences between these students in their use and familiarity with these new substituted words. The detailed results are presented in the following tables.

It is interesting to note here that the same research was done at the University of Najaf Abad about 4 years ago. The subjects were all female and it has compared 20 students of English literature with 20 students of Persian literature and the result was About 31% of English group used substituted words whereas 47% of Persian group used them. And about 42% of the substituted words was odd and unfamiliar for English group and about 32% was odd for Persian group. We can come to this point that after 4 years the substituted words has become more familiar for especially educated people and it has found its place among them Although this research is very limited and is limited to just one or two University especially English and Persian group but in my opinion in some years later we will have fruitful results despite the difficulty of job.

Conclusion

Language change has indicated that it is natural, inevitable and continuous and involves interwoven sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors which can not easily be disentangled from one another. Continual language change is natural and inevitable and it is due to a combination of psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors. By an analogy we can refer to a natural language as an old garment that has been patched and mended. The overall outline is perceivable, to a greater or lesser extent, but some parts have worn away and been replaced, one section may have been lost altogether, and in another place a bit from another source may have been tacked on.

As mentioned earlier, the language of the world changes over a period of time. Lexical changes are the most noticeable form of change in the language. During recent years many new terms relating to western technology and culture have become part of the vocabulary of world's language. The existence of foreign words in language is also the result of imperfect translation and also some political, social and economical factors. One of the goals of Language Academy has been to purify language from foreign words. Persian Language Academy which was established in 1360 has attempted to substitute some new words for the borrowed words. One of the important stages in language planning is evaluation of language Academy planning i.e., evaluating the results to see to what extent their attempts have been acceptable and effective. Concerning the Persian Language Academy in this regard it is important to see whether their substituted words have been accepted and used or not.

Based on the results which were obtained we see that in spite of attempts of Persian Language Academy most of the substituted words are unfamiliar and odd for the educated people and even some of these words hadn't been heard and encountered before. Of course, it must be mentioned that some of the substituted words which were odd in the past are more acceptable now and are used in the language. May be it requires more time to be accepted by people. But some of these new substituted words are difficult and complicate, and as human beings are economical (Chomsky minimalist program) in everything even in their use of language, they prefer words which are familiar for them and find it easier to use them in their language.

Of course, in some cases using the borrowed forms is more prestigious and people prefer to use the borrowed words than the substituted words in order to make themselves closer to high social classes in the society. In fact using the foreign words is somehow prestigious for them and they try to use them more frequently in common speech.

As the result of the study show there are some differences between students of English literature, Persian literature, and Arabic literature in their use and familiarity with the borrowed and substituted forms, but they are not very wide. Most of the educated students even in Persian literature are more familiar with borrowed words which have been used for many years and are accepted more by the members of community. Perhaps in

the following years more of these substituted words by Persian Language Academy be accepted by people and used more frequently in spoken and written form of language. Of course as I mentioned, some of them are strange and odd and there is doubt that these words be used ever with the passage of time in the future, but it is still the goal of language planners and especially Persian Language Academy to purify language from foreign language words

Table1. Percentage of three groups

	Students of English Literature	Students of Persian Literature	Students of Arabic Literature
The borrowed words which are used more frequently	74%	60%	67%
The substituted words which are used more frequently	20%	33%	30.5%
The odd substituted words	21%	10%	4.5%

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