

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Language Contacts in the Age of Global Communication: English and International Lexical Borrowing

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I. Setting the aims, presenting the topic

The aim of my dissertation is to investigate linguistic borrowing, more precisely, lexical borrowing from a sociolinguistic point of view. It is a rather novel approach to analyze borrowing from the perspective of language users and society, as all previous related theories belonged to the framework of historical and contact linguistics, hence they concentrated less on the inevitable role of language use. In my thesis, I seek an answer to the question concerning the role of English as a lingua franca in modern lexical borrowing by investigating how it borrows and lends elements at an international level.

My starting point in treating the above problem was that the individual languages exist as part of the global language system (DE SWAAN 2004: 187). This fact exerts a strong influence on the life of languages: on their system and change and consequently, traditional types of language contacts should also be reinterpreted. Accordingly, one of the major theoretical goals of my work was to find an answer to the question whether earlier theories are still perfectly valid among the circumstances of the global language system. By doing so, I had to find the weaknesses of these theories, which have sometimes become inappropriate within this new global linguistic situation. However, at the same time, I also attempted to emphasize their novel elements which still hold today. My dissertation is based on theoretical foundations in two big topics: on the one hand, the role of English in today's global language system was looked into and on the other hand, theories of language contacts, especially of lexical borrowings were taken into account.

The increase in the importance of English was probably the most significant geolinguistic event of the 20th century and this tendency is still ongoing. In order to analyze the present situation of English in great depth, a model had to be found which can most adequately describe the present linguistic relations in the world. This, however, is an involved problem as it has both socio- and psycholinguistic aspects in the traditional sense, as well as implications for language politics in the wider sense, whereby the prestige factor must also be taken into account. In my dissertation, the models of TRUDGILL (2001), PHILLIPSON (1996: 17–27) and KACHRU (1996) are presented in greater detail, shedding light both on their advantages and their deficiencies. An accurate linguistic picture of today's world, with an emphasis on the role of global English, is suggested by ABRAM DE SWAAN (2004). His approach is utterly new in the sense that the

concept of the linguistic interest of speakers is highlighted in an economic–sociological–political framework. His views and conceptual base proved to be the most appropriate for me to look into the role of English in language contacts, especially in international lexical borrowing. A further task set was to test the operability of DE SWAAN's model on linguistic material.

The latest theories of language contacts were also treated with a highly critical but meticulous approach, placing the phenomenon of lexical transfer in the foreground. My main goal in this respect was to rethink the general theoretical models of lexical borrowing in a complex way and possibly develop them further. Traditional theories regard transfer phenomena namely only from one particular aspect (one can find e.g. strictly language-based, sociolinguistic or psycholinguistic approaches) but tend to neglect more complex relations between the individual perspectives. In my dissertation, I seek to deal with these specific approaches in a complex manner and thus throw new light upon the concept of transfer as such, as well as upon its components. Nevertheless, I have emphasized the sociolinguistic aspect more than other ones so I had to take into account how the latest technological innovations have an influence on languages and to what extent they create new conditions for language contacts. From this it follows that in the present situation, the term *language contact* needs to be reinterpreted and redefined from a linguistic point of view, since the concept itself has never existed in its global form before.

The two large topics mentioned above – the role of English in the global language system and the question of language contacts – are not only addressed from a theoretical point of view but also by presenting specific language constellations. Therefore I included two detailed case studies: in the first one, I have demonstrated what the role of the English language in the European Union is and what conflicts characterize the relationship between the individual languages of the EU. The other case study, not quite independent of the first one, analyzes the linguistic situation of multilingual Switzerland, for I argue that it can be considered a linguistic model of Europe from the point of view of language politics and geolinguistics. A special emphasis was put on the problem of how the appearance of international English is changing the traditionally multilingual situation, characterized by the side-by-side presence of diglossia and multilingualism.

II. Delineating the methods used

The theoretical background described above was backed up by empirical studies in the longest chapter of my dissertation, the aim of which is to show the characteristic features of lexical transfer on actual linguistic material. The emergence of a global language system goes together with the strengthening of interference processes between languages, which can be traced at various levels of linguistic description. Out of these, mostly lexical processes were focused on, as the lexicon is the subsystem of language which can best demonstrate the modification of language contacts (cf. LANSTYÁK 2006: 15). As I intended to include several languages and a group of lexical items as big as possible, I only focused on direct lexical loans, those being the core of lexical transfer. Apart from the significance of this type, my choice is also justified by the fact that it is in the area of direct loans where I could count on the most reliable sources.

I have studied direct loans in four languages, placing English in the centre of my attention, which was examined both as a source and as an intaking language in great depth. English, being on top of the global language hierarchy, takes in a high number of lexical elements from a wide range of languages. At the same time, apart from English native elements, these newly acquired ones also make their way to other languages, which assigns an important transmitting role to English on the international level. The other three languages analyzed were Spanish, which is also a globally important one, German, whose international role is somewhat on the decline and Hungarian, which – apart from being my native language – is a medium-sized one in the world, completely different genetically and typologically from the other three.

On examining the 5200 new borrowings, their source language, semantic and lexical categorization (which part of speech they belong to), as well as their grade of integration were taken into account. An accurate description of these phenomena served only as a basis for analyzing the reasons behind these processes. This was done in the hope that through a detailed study, we can get new findings not only about lexical transfer, but based on general conclusions, the fundamental theories can also be enriched.

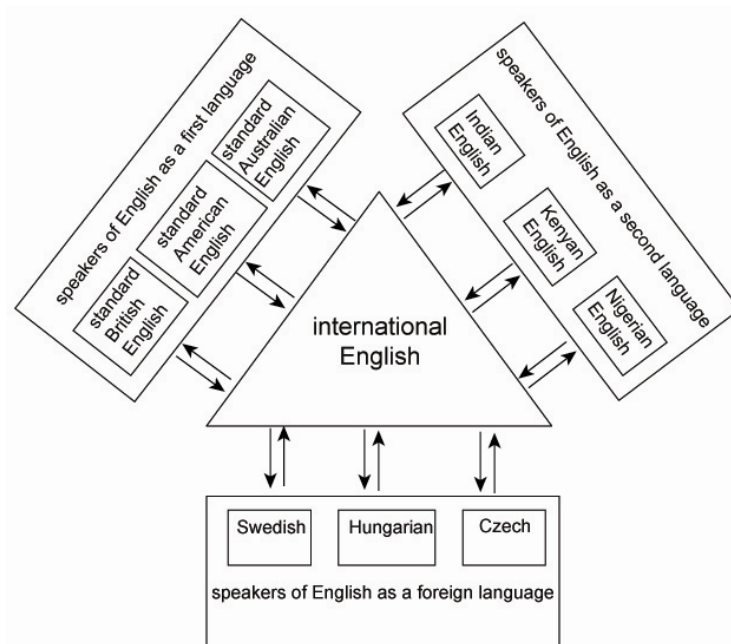
III. Results obtained

1) The spread of global English has a strong influence on the relationship between other languages and on language contacts in general, as well. My study concerning new borrowings reinforced DE SWAAN's economically–sociologically oriented theory of the global language system. My analyses showed that English plays a determining role in international lexical transfer processes. Its hypercentral nature is justified by lexical borrowing processes from various aspects. An important characteristic feature is that English adapts lexical elements from a wide range of languages – this fact further enhances its hypercentral role. It transmits the majority of adapted elements further on to other languages, functioning as an international link language. Superposing itself over other languages, English creates new types of language contacts, that is, its catalyst role is becoming more and more important by enriching other languages and itself being enriched by others. This phenomenon, termed *intection*, is regarded as a new type of language contacts by EHLICH (1994: 111).

2) As a result of it becoming an international or global language, English can be regarded rather as a second language than a foreign one in certain countries. Apart from its international role, its intranational importance is also increasing, which gradually leads to the emergence of a new type of diglossia: between international English and the national language(s) (cf. e.g. LÜDI 2003: 278, CHESTERMAN 2005: 123).

3) A further international trend of our days is that the individual national varieties of English are getting stronger and thus diverging from each other. At the same time, a new kind of international variety is emerging and is on the increase (which is referred to with different names in linguistic literature). The two types of varieties, however, serve different purposes: while the local ones function as a means of local communication, international English is the medium of global communication (cf. MODIANO 1999: 26, CRYSTAL 1999: 15). The warranty of the existence of global English on the long term is exactly the factor that has created it: global communication.

4) The present situation of international English and its relationship with other languages, as well as with its own other national varieties is shown in the following picture.



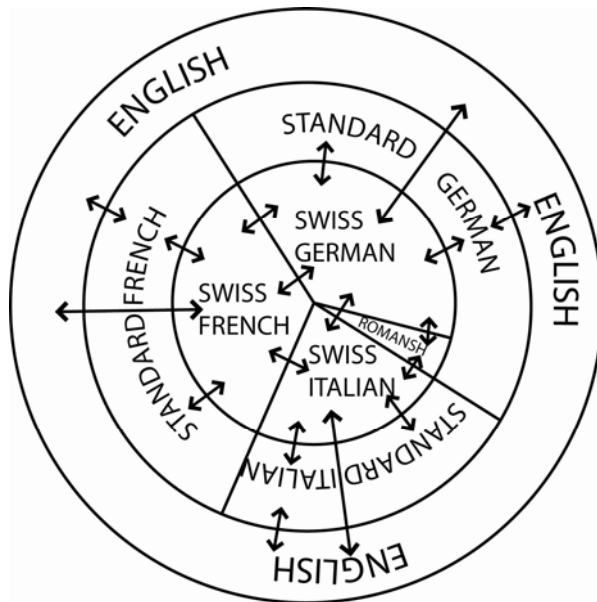
Comparing the role of international English with the one-time situation of international Latin, the conclusion has been drawn that despite several similarities between the two varieties, also significant differences can be observed, especially from a contact linguistic aspect and from the perspective of language politics.

5) Although English can be regarded a lingua franca in today's Europe, it does not always prove to be the most appropriate means of international communication (e.g. in border areas or in the so-called Euroregions). Bearing this in mind, I have introduced the concept of *situational communicational value* (with an allusion to DE SWAAN's *communicational value*), which is meant to measure the extent of interest gained by a speaker of a certain language in a certain situation.

6) When addressing questions of language contacts, I followed VAN COETSEM's (2000) terminology. Accordingly, the term *transfer* is used to describe the process itself, whereas elements which appear in a language as a result of a transfer are termed *borrowings*. More specifically, in the description of lexical transfer, I entirely relied on LANSTYÁK's (2006: 15–56) Hungarian terminology, for it does not regard lexical transfer as a historical process but rather supposes a strong link between contact linguistics and sociolinguistics. Therefore, I considered the traditional distinction between loan words

and foreign words (which is widespread in Hungarian linguistics) to be superfluous and hence abandoned these terms.

7) The present linguistic situation of multilingual Switzerland from the point of view of language contacts is modelled in the following way:



8) The global role of English is also justified by the fact that English elements make up a significant group among borrowings in other languages. My study has shown that in this respect, large supercentral languages such as Spanish are exposed to a somewhat slighter English influence than those ones playing a less central role in the global language system. When looking at this question from another perspective, we can also conclude that languages which stand at a higher level of the global communication hierarchy are enriched by lexical elements from a larger number of other languages than others. The presupposition that German no longer plays a supercentral role is supported by the finding that its indices concerning the percentage of English elements and the number of source languages show a great similarity with Hungarian, which is a central language.

9) From a semantic point of view, the main groups of borrowings in English are connected to its global, hypercentral role: these words typically describe other cultures, namely those with which English enters contact situations. The largest semantic groups among Spanish, German, as well as Hungarian borrowings are words of computer science

and technology, which is due to the fact that these elements are almost exceptionally borrowed from English and the major source language in all three cases is English.

10) When addressing the question of which parts of speech the analyzed borrowings belong to, the claim often found in the literature of language contacts seems to be proven. The majority of borrowings are nouns: in the case of all four studied languages, the proportion of nouns or NPs is over 90%.

11) Concerning the integration of borrowings, a clear tendency can be observed: integration is the most common and most profound in the case of Hungarian (which is a central language); significantly less in German, even less in Spanish, whereas in hypercentral English we can hardly speak of morphological or orthographical integration. Based on the above, we can suppose that the smaller a language is and the lower it is situated in the global language system, the higher the degree of integration. The integration of elements borrowed by Hungarian is explained not only by its protective language politics, but also by its different genetic and typological characteristics. It is worth also noting the differing borrowing strategies of Spanish and German, which must be due to their distinct geopolitical situation.

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