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## LEXICAL INTERFERENCE AS A MODE OF CONVERGENT CHANGE

Subordinative bilingualism leads to the forms of speech intermediate between those characteristic of monolinguals in either language. These intermediate or 'compromise' forms which develop and spread in a contact language by the unconscious choice on the part of its bilingual speakers are cumulative in some special direction and constitute its new drift. Linguists, for whom the primary interest of bilingualism is the relationships entered into by the two languages as a result of their contact, have termed the direction of this linguistic drift convergence. Convergence (convergent change) has long been regarded as a natural and inevitable manifestation of the communicative function of a language under subordinative bilingualism and as the key to bilingual performance<sup>1</sup>. "Contact breeds imitation and imitation breeds convergence", such was the brief and precise description of the bilingual effects on the contact language given by André Martinet in his *Preface* to Uriel Weinreich's classic monograph *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (1953). He has also emphasized that "linguistic research has so far favored the study of divergence at the expense of convergence" and that "it is time the right balance should be restored"<sup>2</sup>.

Strange to say, the often quoted definition of linguistic interference<sup>3</sup>, worked out by Uriel Weinreich and so widely adopted by linguists to refer to many and varied phenomena of speech that result from language contact, leaves convergence out of account. Lexical interference, which in most cases has been approached in terms of loanwords plus loanshifts filling lexical gaps in the borrowing language, is actual-

<sup>1</sup> See: Розенцвейг В. Ю. Языковые контакты. — Л., 1972, pp. 6–9; Haugen E. Bilingualism, language contact, and immigrant languages in the United States: a research report 1956–1970. — In: *Current Trends in Linguistics*. Mouton, 1973, vol. 10, p. 521.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: Weinreich U. *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*. — Mouton, 1968, p. VIII.

<sup>3</sup> "Those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language..." (p. 1).

ly identified with the long-studied phenomenon of borrowing, and its definition<sup>4</sup> doesn't refer to convergence either. Nevertheless, in defining interference in general and lexical interference in particular, the methodological emphasis on convergence invites the interest of the linguist. A unified and consistent approach to lexical interference as a mode of convergent change enables the linguist not only to reveal how the bilingual reduces language distance through the use of properties from the other language, but also to take account of the significant role of lexical interference in the selection of one variation rather than another from the recipient language itself. Otherwise, as some linguists admit, the description of lexical interference and convergent change in the lexico-semantic system of a contact language as a result of it remains to be essentially dependent on the methods developed in comparative-historical linguistics<sup>5</sup>.

The purpose of the comments that follow is to evolve an interpretation of lexical interference that sees it as a mode of convergent change. Certain generalizations will be briefly demonstrated on the materials elicited from speakers of American Lithuanian, a typical immigrant language in the USA, and the Lithuanian immigrant press published there.

As a point of departure, we define a word as a linguistic sign which, in Saussurean terms, combines the signified and the signifier, or, in other terms, a word content and a word expression<sup>6</sup>. We assume that lexical interference arises when the bilingual speaker attempts to reflect the "same" word content by a word expression which has some parallelism to that in another language<sup>7</sup>. Consequently, lexical interference can be defined as the bilingual's attempt to express an identical word content by a convergent word expression.

In accordance with this unified and consistent approach to lexical interference and convergence in which it results, lexical interference can be described in the following ways:

1. In the case of simple (non-derived and non-compound) lexical units, (a) to an identical word content a phonetically convergent word expression is attached,

<sup>4</sup> E. Haugen proposed to define borrowing as "the attempt by a speaker to reproduce in one language patterns which he has learned in another". See: Haugen E. *The Norwegian Language in America: a Study in Bilingual Behavior*. — Indiana University Press, 1969 (first edition 1953), p. 363.

<sup>5</sup> See, e. g., Розенцвейг В. Ю. Методы описания лексико-семантических явлений языковых контактов. — В кн.: Методы билингвистических исследований. М., 1976, с. 84—86.

<sup>6</sup> The terms are borrowed from Spang-Hanssen H. *The many virtues of the distinction between content and expression*. — *Studia linguistica*. Lund, 1978, vol. 32, N 1—2, pp. 174—180.

<sup>7</sup> The language behaviour of the bilingual speaker is in many respects identical with that of a translator in the process of translation. See, e. g., Nida E. *Toward a Science of Translating*. — Leiden, 1964, chap. 8; Швейцер А. Д. О некоторых общих методах лингвистического анализа речевой деятельности билингва и процесса перевода. — В кн.: Методы билингвистических исследований. М., 1976, с. 33—42.

or (b) to an identical word content a semantically convergent word expression is attached, or both processes may be combined.

2. In the case of multiple lexical units, in addition to the above mentioned processes, one more specific process is possible: to an identical word content a structurally convergent word expression is attached.

Thus, in the analysis of the many and varied instances of lexical interference, three types of convergence may be distinguished: (a) phonetic, (b) semantic, and (c) structural. In the case of simple (non-derived and non-compound) lexical units, the first two types of convergence may be combined. In the case of multiple lexical units, even all the three types of convergence may be combined.

Phonetic and semantic convergence of simple lexical units is attained (a) by the transfer (or adoption) of a L2 word expression, (b) by the semantic extension of a phonetically or rather phonetically and semantically convergent indigenous word, and (c) by the selection of a phonetically and semantically convergent indigenous word. The results of the first mode of lexical interference are generally known as loanwords or pure loanwords. Examples of such loanwords are available from practically every language. In American Lithuanian, for instance, they may be represented by *burdas* < *board*, *farma* < *farm*, *fiksytis* < *fix*, *kenseris* < *cancer*, *kornai* < *corn*, *punčiuoti* < *punch*, *skebas* < *scab*, *varnišius* < *varnish*, *ziperis* < *zipper*, etc.

The semantic extension of a phonetically convergent indigenous word presents a problematic case. Though Haugen doubted whether the sound alone could give rise to the new meaning, he proposed to call this mode of lexical interference a homophonous loanshift extension<sup>8</sup>. In the Lithuanian immigrant press, for instance, the words *aspirantas*, *data* and *prospektai* are used in the meanings characteristic of the AmE words *aspirant*, *data* and *prospects* (in modern Standard Lithuanian these words mean 'post-graduate', 'date' and 'avenue' respectively). As these words are rather recent borrowings even in modern Standard Lithuanian and to some speakers of American Lithuanian were entirely unknown before immigration, they may be considered to be pure loanwords from American English. On the other hand, an attempt to prove that the borrowed meaning and the indigenous meaning are related is also possible, provided that we do not exclude the possibility that to some (especially more recent) immigrants these words were also Lithuanian at the time of immigration. In most cases, however, the semantic extension of phonetically and semantically convergent indigenous words in American Lithuanian is observed (homologous loanshift extension, in Haugen's terminology). It is usually exemplified with the so-called international words that are so common to the European languages. For instance, the word *rekordas*, which in Lithuanian is known only in the meaning

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<sup>8</sup> For this and further references to Haugen's terminology of borrowings see his monograph *The Norwegian Language in America*.

'an attested top performance', and the word *kreditas*, which in Lithuanian is used only as a business term, in American Lithuanian have acquired almost all the meanings characteristic of AmE *record* and *credit* respectively.

The third mode of phonetic and semantic convergence occurs when lexical interference determines the selection of a phonetically and semantically convergent indigenous word rather than another from the lexical repertoire of the contact language itself. For instance, due to the homologous identification with the English words *palace*, *passanger*, *place*, the pre-immigration loanwords *palocius*, *pasazierius*, *plecius*, which have been rejected in modern Lithuanian as alien and archaic, respond to the reinforcement of English and are still used in the Lithuanian immigrant press. Thus, lexical interference may result not only in the retention of phonetically and semantically convergent words, but also in their more frequent occurrence in speech.

Semantic convergence of simple lexical units is attained by the semantic extension of semantically convergent indigenous words. To describe it, Haugen proposed to use the term synonymous loanshift extension. For instance, the Lithuanian word *šaltis* was originally restricted to mean 'low temperature', but through the interference of the English synonymous word *cold* it has been extended in American Lithuanian to represent 'catarrh'. The verb *šaukti* 'shout' has acquired the new meaning 'telephone' on the model of the English word *call*. The Lithuanian adjective *minkštas* is used in the meaning 'non-alcoholic' on the model of the synonymous English word *soft*.

Finally, phonetic convergence of simple lexical units occurs when the phonetic form is slightly changed on the model of a cognate in a language in contact, without effect on its content<sup>9</sup>, e. g., when *šokoladas* 'chocolate' becomes *čokoladas*, *deimantas* 'diamond' becomes *daimantas*, *karnavalas* 'carnival' becomes *karnivalas*, *limonadas* 'lemonade' becomes *lemonadas* in American Lithuanian.

Three modes of convergence as a result of lexical interference are possible for multiple (derived and compound) lexical units (or even larger units).

Structural-semantic plus phonetic convergence occurs when transferred derivatives and compounds are structurally analysed or 'checked' from the point of view of the word-formative or syntactic patterns of the recipient language (if they are transferred unanalysed or 'unchecked', they are considered to be simple). *The Dictionary of English Loanwords in American Lithuanian* by Algirdas Margeris<sup>10</sup>, for instance, contains some borrowed derivatives which are analysed from the point of view of the derivational patterns of Lithuanian, e. g., *inlistyti* < *enlist*, *indžiojyti* <

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Weinreich U. Op. cit., p. 50, or the cases termed as partial phonic transference in Clyne M. G. Transference and Triggering. — The Hague, 1967, p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Margeris A. Amerikos lietuviai ir angliškųjų skolinių žodynas. — Chicago, 1956, p. 149 — 357.

*enjoy*, *inšiūryti* < *insure* (cf. their reflexive forms *insilistyti*, *insidžiojyti*, *inšišiūryti*). In American Lithuanian we also encounter quite a number of transferred English compound nouns which are obviously 'checked' from the point of view of the compounding rules of Lithuanian. Though their expression shows nothing beyond phonetic convergence, there is enough evidence to prove the above statement: these compounds are assigned to the 'soft' or palatalized declensions of Lithuanian nouns, whereas their second constituents which function in American Lithuanian as separate loanwords are assigned to the 'hard' or unpalatalized declensions of the same gender, e. g., *betauzė* < *bathroom*, *grynauzė* < *greenhouse*, *kortauzė* < *courthouse*, *flapauzė* < *flophouse* (cf. *auza* < *house*); *karšapė* < *car shop*, *šiūšapė* < *shoe shop* (cf. *šapa* < *shop*); *bukštoris* < *bookstore*, *drukštoris* < *drugstore* (cf. *štoras* < *store*); *strytkaris* < *streetcar* (cf. *karas* < *car*). Structural-semantic plus partly phonetic convergence of multiple lexical units is represented by hybrid loanwords or loanblends (in Haugen's terminology), e. g., *dortinas* < *dirty*, *išbėluoti* < *bail out*; *apartmentnamis* < *apartment house*, *gatvėkaris* < *streetcar*.

Structural-semantic convergence of multiple lexical units is attained (a) by the reproduction of a L2 pattern in terms of semantically convergent indigenous elements (which results in creation of a new word or a new word-combination in the recipient language), (b) by the semantic extension of a structurally and semantically convergent indigenous derivative or compound (or even larger lexical unit), and (c) by the selection of a structurally and semantically convergent indigenous word rather than another from the lexical repertoire of the contact language itself.

The first mode of lexical interference which results in structural-semantic convergence of multiple lexical units is generally known as loan translation, or loan creation (in Haugen's terminology). In American Lithuanian it is represented by derivatives, e. g., *išvietinti* < *displace*, *judis* < *movie*, *skaidrė* < *transparency*, *stūmis* < *slide*, *šnekis* < *talkie*, *žudystė* < *murdership*, and compounds, e. g., *erdvėlaivis* < *spaceship*, *greitkelis* < *speedway*, *įstatymdarys* < *lawmaker*, *ragangaudys* < *witch-hunter*, *savisamdis* < *self-employed*, *sveturgimis* < *foreign-born*, *vaikvagystė* < *kidnapping*. The English phrase *ruling circles* has served as a model for American Lithuanian *valdantys rateliai*, *Thanksgiving Day* for *Ačiū davimo diena*, and *give somebody a black eye* for *duoti kam juodą akį*.

No less numerous in American Lithuanian are instances exhibiting the second mode of structural-semantic convergence of multiple lexical units as a result of interference (loanshift extension, according to Haugen). For example, the Lithuanian free word combination *šluba antis* has acquired the figurative meaning of the English phrase *lame duck*, and through the interference of the English phrase *spill*

the milk the Lithuanian *paliėti pieną* is used figuratively in American Lithuanian. We also encounter suffixal derivatives which have acquired new meanings, extending their previous semantic similarity with structurally convergent English equivalents, e. g., *atsakomybė* 'duty' < *responsibility*, *narystė* 'number of members' < *membership*, *skirtumas* 'disagreement' < *difference*. Of course, the semantic extension of the above given multiple lexical units can be easily explained without taking into consideration their structural parallelism with the English equivalents. Yet this linguistic property should not be left out of account, because in most cases both form (in this case the similar arrangement of semantically convergent elements) and meaning work together in creating the extension of meaning. One of the principles of loan-shift extension formulated by Haugen reads as follows: "If there is a native word  $a_1$  with meaning  $A_1$  and another  $a_2$  with meaning  $A_2$ , the word  $a_1$  will often be used in meaning  $A_2$  if there is a foreign word  $b$  which combines the meaning of  $a_1$  and  $a_2$ , especially if  $a_1$  resembles  $b$  in sound more than  $a_2$  does" (pp. 400–401). For multiple lexical units this principle should be revised, laying special emphasis on the importance of their structural similarity.

Finally, structural-semantic convergence of multiple lexical units occurs when lexical interference determines the selection of a structurally convergent indigenous word rather than another from the lexical repertoire of the contact language itself to match a foreign equivalent. Thus, for instance, through the interference of English nouns produced on the extremely productive derivational model 'verb + *er*', American Lithuanians tend to give preference to Lithuanian occasional or potential deverbal nouns rather than other means to denote 'person engaged in activity', e. g., *įvedėjas* (< *in-troducer*), *šaukėjas* (< *caller*). It is also due to the lexical interference of English (which manifests itself in the tendency for semantic similarity to be reflected by structural symmetry) that the Lithuanian symmetrical models of functional transposition 'noun → attributive adjective' by means of the suffix *-inis* and 'denominal adjective → adverb' by means of the suffix *-iai* are less restricted in American Lithuanian than in modern Standard Lithuanian<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, the interpretation of lexical interference that sees it as a mode of convergent change in the contact language enables the linguist to describe it linguistically as the assimilation of the characteristics of their signifieds and signifiers and the rules for using them as the result of contacts and also to take account of lexical interference as a factor in the activation and retardation of the use of indigenous words in the contact language.

<sup>11</sup> Pažūsis L. Priesagos *-inis* būdvardžių ir priesagos *-(in)iai* prieveiksmių aktyvizacija Šiaurės Amerikos lietuvių kalboje. — *Kalbotyra*, 1979, t. 30(1), p. 70–77.

## LEKŠINĖ INTERFERENCIJA KAIP KONVERGENTINIO KITIMO BŪDAS

### *Re z i u m ė*

Šiame straipsnyje subordinacinio bilingvizmo sąlygomis kylančią leksinę interferenciją bandoma interpretuoti kaip kontaktinės kalbos konvergentinio kitimo būdą. Remiantis JAV lietuvių išei-  
vių kalbos medžiaga ir operuojant leksinių vienetų fonetinės, semantinės bei struktūrinės konvergen-  
cijos sąvokomis, parodoma, kad tokia interpretacija duoda galimybę ne tik nuosekliai lingvistiškai  
apibūdinti įvairaus tipo skolinius (šiuo atveju anglų kalbos skolinius JAV lietuvių išei-  
vių kalboje), atsižvelgiant į jų vieningą funkcinių kryptingumą kalbų kontaktų sąlygomis, bet ir  
išskirti leksinę interferenciją kaip pačios kontaktinės kalbos žodžių funkcinio krūvio kitimą (akty-  
vizaciją arba retardaciją) lemiantį faktorių.