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WEST EUROPE AND THE BALTIC: TYPES OF LANGUAGE CONTACTS AND LEXICAL BORROWINGS

The problem of language contacts is one of the central problems in Baltic studies, as the speakers of Lithuanian and Latvian have for centuries lived at the important cross-roads between East and West. The Western linguistic influence (chiefly of lexical character) can be found in both Lithuanian and Latvian, though Latvian is definitely more influenced than its southern neighbour, which can be explained historically.

In order to understand the process of borrowing from West-European languages into Lithuanian and Latvian, one must cast a glance, though in passing, at some historical facts of Lithuanian and Latvian nations and their languages.

Firstly, it must be said that there is a marked difference in historical conditions setting ground for the development of each national language. In Lithuanian the beginnings of the standardization and the creation of writing were carried out relatively independently by the Lithuanians themselves. Due to the German conquest the same processes in Latvian were done by the Germans.

Secondly, Lithuania was cut off the Baltic Sea for centuries and, therefore, direct contacts between Lithuanian and foreign speakers had a somewhat different character in comparison with the Latvians who lived along the coast and had several sea-ports (most important of them Riga), which ensured lively ties with West-European maritime countries.

Thirdly, there were marked differences in religion after the Reformation (Lithuania remained mostly Catholic, Latvia became Protestant to a large extent), which also contributed to the differentiation of linguistic influences.

German was the first Western language which left noteworthy traces in both Lithuanian and Latvian. The German influence was more limited in Lithuanian due to Lithuania's geographical position and was not so intense. Since the 13th century the Germans ruled Western Lithuania, and that is why German had a rather strong impact on Lithuanian in this area (which in particular cases was passed on to the "Mainland" Lithuania). In the rest of Lithuania the major influence was exerted by the Slavic languages (especially Polish after 1385) which, on the one hand, blocked the German influence, and, on the other hand, contributed to its serving

as an intermediary. Nevertheless, the immigrant German craftsmen and merchants represented a noteworthy linguistic influence. All the mentioned factors resulted in quite a number of German loanwords in Lithuanian.¹ The different types of contacts caused a diversity of loanforms, e. g. Low German *spōle* gave *špuolė* in the Samogitian (Žemaičiai) dialect, High German *Spule*→*špūle* in Prussian Lithuanian and a Polish intermediary *szpula*→*špuliá* in Eastern Lithuanian.² After World War II the German linguistic influence has been steadily diminishing.

The impact of German upon Lithuanian is best reflected in K. Alminauskis's study and to some extent in Prellwitz's work.³ These and other studies have a common drawback — an inconsistent etymological approach. True German words are mixed up with a considerable number of words which are of non-German origin, e. g. *adjutántas*, *admirōlas*, *kolibriai*.

There are no generalized studies concerning Romance and English elements in Lithuanian. The loanwords of Romanic origin are present already in the first printed sources in the 16th and 17th centuries, their number growing in the centuries to follow, though at present the stream of French and other Romance loanwords has dried out. The first English loans most probably penetrated into Lithuanian in the second half of the 19th century, since the first dictionary of foreign and "obscure" words contained 45 anglicisms.⁴ This group of borrowings has been rapidly expanding nowadays.

West-European loanwords in Latvian have been given greater prominence than in Lithuanian. Detailed studies reflect the historical background and the qualitative characteristics of German, English and Romance borrowings.

It is believed that direct contacts between the Latvians and German sea traders began in the second half of the 12th century. So the influence of German (Middle Low German) on Latvian is supposed to have started already in the last decades of the 12th century. In the 13th century separate Latvian communities were gradually conquered by the Germans. A considerable number of craftsmen and merchants followed the Crusaders. Middle Low German dominated till the middle of the 16th century. In the 1590s High German became the language of administration and school though Low German was spoken by some settlers in the 17th and even 18th centuries. German and Latvian were spoken in a topographically and politically unified community, thus conditions for direct (intimate) borrowing

¹ Alminauskis K. Die Germanismen des Litauischen. Kaunas, 1931.S. 23—150.

² Alminauskis K. Op. cit. S. 13.

³ Prellwitz W. Die deutschen Lehnwörter im Preussischen und Lautlehre der deutschen Lehnwörter im Litauischen. Göttingen, 1891.

⁴ Šlapelis J. Svetimų ir nesuprantamų žodžių žodynėlis. Tilžė, 1907.

were created. Exposed to the dominating position of the German language and culture for several centuries, Latvian absorbed a considerable number of (Middle) Low German words denoting various spheres of life: household, e. g. *lāde, bēniņi, lūka, steliņģis, katls, šķivis, ziepes*; tools, e. g. *ēvele, vīle, zāģis*; plants, e. g. *sīpols, vīķi, plūme*; parts of the body, e. g. *deniņi, riba, rumpis, niere*, etc. The majority of loanwords were nouns, though other parts of speech were also represented: verbs, e. g. *būvēt, spēlēt*; adjectives, e. g. *brīvs, slikts*; conjunctions, e. g. *un*; interjections, e. g. *ak!*; words of affirmation, e. g. *jā*.

Later centuries brought mainly the High German influence, e. g. *kartupelis, runkulis, ķirsis, kleita, loze, punkts*.

The German influence was slowed down to some extent in the second half of the 19th century due to the neo-Latvian movement, the revival of national spirit, puristic tendencies, as well as to the stronger imposition of Russian in all vitally important spheres. Since the late 1910s German ceased to be a significant source of borrowing owing to cardinal social and political changes, the elimination of German dominance in Latvia. In 1941–1944 a number of words were borrowed due to the German occupation of Latvia and military operations, e. g. designations of arms, military offices, military or semi-military ranks.

The most extensive research on German loanwords in Latvian was published by J. Sehwers in 1936.⁵ In his view the total number of German loanwords reaches 2750. A. Ozols states that out of 2750 only 700 can be regarded as part and parcel of Modern Latvian.⁶ About 300 words are not borrowings from German (German played the role of an intermediary) and the remaining part consists of obsolete and subliterate words. Further corrections of these statements can be made. The number of pseudo-Germanisms is greater than stated by A. Ozols (e. g. *pudele, rozīne, trumpis, bezāns, brase, klīze, skuoners, īvēt*). J. Sehwers on his part missed many German borrowings because of the limitations in the scope of source materials. One example will suffice: he presents 134 words belonging to the seamen's and fishermen's lexicon. But, in fact, Latvian written sources alone reflect more than 300 loanwords.

After World War II new German loanwords have become rare. Many older borrowings have dropped out of use, the German element has been decreasing with each generation of speakers.

Next place to the German loanwords occupy the words of Romance origin. They are also numerous (approximately 2500), but they belong to a different type

⁵ Sehwers J. Sprachlich-kulturhistorische Untersuchungen vornehmlich über den deutschen Einfluß im Lettischen. Leipzig, 1936.

⁶ Ozols A. Aizgūtā veclatviešu rakstu valodas leksika un mūsdienu latviešu valoda // LVU Zinātniskie raksti. 86. sēj. Rīga, 1968. L. 11–48.

of borrowings. Though Latvia is situated far away from the Romanic countries, its geographical position permits the establishment of distant cultural contacts if other necessary factors are secured. For several centuries after the German conquest peaceful decades mingled with numerous wars. The Latvian territory was invaded, ruined, and divided time and again. Only two things altered but little: the German element constantly preserved its dominant role and the Latvians (in Livonia, under the Swedish rule or in the Russian Empire) invariably constituted the lowest, uneducated layer of society. The Latvian language was of no social importance till the 60–70s of the 19th century. It is only natural that deprived of statehood and public significance Latvian was very limited in its functions and lacked almost any possibility of establishing channels for contacts with the languages, speakers of which were not bordering or sharing the Latvian territory. Thus more than 90 per cent of Romanic words are indirect loans with German and (less often) Russian or (even less often) Polish as intermediaries. There are also problems of etymological character. In some cases it is difficult to determine the true source between two or more Romance languages, sometimes it is hard to tell a Romanic word from a Latin one. It is rather difficult to check the chronology of Romanic loanwords in Latvian. Unfortunately, the early Latvian written sources (16th century) are of strictly religious character, whereas gallicisms and other Romanic loanwords belong mainly to secular domains. The 17th-century dictionaries registered only a few Romanic words. In the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century Latvian printed matter represented more than 100 words.⁷ These early loanwords form a heterogeneous bulk: there can be distinguished a large group of military terms (*ģenerālis, kapteinis, leitnants, dragūns*), names of clothes and fashions (*jaka, kamzolis, parūka*), household words (*lampa, kastrolis, pudele, terīne*), social and business terms (*komisija, kontrabanda, banka, kase, fabrika*). It seems very likely that many of these borrowings were familiar not only to the educated and therefore Germanized Latvians, but also to the urban and rural population of lower level. Still, the “prime” of Romance (chiefly French) influence was to come later – in the last decades of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th centuries, when hundreds of loans penetrated into Latvian. A scheme has been worked out for the historical analysis of loanwords in Latvian (especially those from distant

⁷ Банков А. Ранние заимствования романского происхождения в лексике латышского языка // International Conference of Baltistics. October 9–12, 1985. Abstracts. Vilnius, 1985. P. 127.

languages)⁸. It is based largely on extralinguistic factors and consists of four periods: (1) till the middle of the 19th century; (2) 1850s–1910s; (3) 1920–1940; (4) after World War II.

The influx of Romanic words (chiefly gallicisms) during the second period can be explained by a complex of motives. Due to certain changes in the social life of the 1860s and 70s (neoLatvian movement, the revival of national spirit, industrial and trade activities of the Latvians, the growth of national press, literature, etc.) the Latvian language underwent a considerable inner development and many of the so-called “international words” were introduced. The process of borrowing was activated by a significant widening of the thematic range and more elaborate, detailed contents of books and newspaper articles, the widening of interests in various strata of the Latvian population, the introduction of new forms of social life (concerts, theatre, song festivals, parties, etc.). The traditional motive for borrowing – the necessity to nominate new (foreign) things and phenomena – had to be complied with too, e. g. *velosipēds*, *automobilis*, *aeroplāns*. Last but not least, a number of educated, publicly influential Latvians had more or less decent knowledge of French.

Due to significant extralinguistic factors the 20s and 30s of the 20th century are singled out as a separate period. With the establishment of the Latvian bourgeois republic the Latvian language had become a state language and the sphere of its functioning had greatly widened. It was the language of education on all levels, the language of administration, communication, etc. The immediate necessity arose to create and develop Latvian terminology in various branches of science and technology, to enrich the vocabulary in new spheres of social life. Native word-building capacities could not cope with the demand, thus loans filled the empty cells. The influence of Romance languages was chiefly made manifest in the sphere of arts and fashions, technical and political terminology.⁹

After World War II the Romanic impact reduced, and at present it is a mere trickle if compared with the flow at the beginning of the century. A number of loanwords went out of active use, e. g. *etaža*, *bordira*, *pjesa*, *ataka*.

Third place goes to borrowings from English. An extensive study of this part of the Latvian vocabulary has been conducted recently and includes a number of

⁸ Baldunčiks J. A Chronological Survey of English Loanwords in Latvian // 4th All-Union Conference on Baltic Linguistics. Abstracts. Rīga. 1980. P. 7–8.

⁹ Банкав А. Слова французского происхождения в современном латышском языке // Baltu valodas senāk un tagad. Rīga, 1985. L. 59–64.

articles¹⁰ and a monograph-dictionary of anglicisms in Latvian (in press), which reflects "biographies" of 1500 loanwords.

The first English loanwords in Latvian are registered in the written sources of the 1780s and 1790s, e. g. *flanelis*, *pudiņš*. One can suggest that limited direct contacts between Latvian and English were established in the 18th and 19th centuries in the sphere of sea-trade (a number of English words could penetrate into the speech of those Latvians who lived in harbour towns). The great boom in seafaring and regular voyages of Latvian ships to Great Britain in the second half of the 19th century probably established direct English-Latvian contacts in maritime media.

Since Latvian newspapers contained more detailed information about the English-speaking countries, their readers got acquainted with such words as *bills*, *džentlmenis*, *fenieši*, *kvēkeri*, *lordmērs*, *toriji*, *vigi*, *čartisti*. The translation of books by J. F. Cooper and T. Mayne Reid into Latvian in the 1880s introduced such words as *skalps*, *tomahauks*, *vigvams*, *mokasini*.

Close relations with the English-speaking countries in the 1920–30s contributed to the further growth of English lexical influence. New loanwords (more than 200) penetrated into fiction, scientific and technical literature, press, colloquial speech and partly were listed in dictionaries. It is probable that the local Anglo-American colony (500–600 persons) also contributed to the English influence on Latvian.

As a result of the great political, economic and social transformations after World War II, the Western linguistic influence considerably weakened and a number of English (as well as German or French) words either lost their up-to-date-ness thus disappearing from the active vocabulary (*bīčkomers*, *faivokloks*, *derbijs*, *bonds*, *skauts*) or changed semantically or stylistically (*klubs*, *rauts*, *reportieris*). The post-war years were characteristic of a generally negative attitude towards everything coming from the West. A certain colouring was attached to such words as *kongresmenis*, *supermenis*, *komiksi*. A few anglicisms were transferred into Latvian from Russian, e. g. *radars*, *inbrīdings*, *leiboristi* (till 1940 *Labour Party* was called in Latvian „strādnieku partija“ (workers' party) or „darba partija“ (labour party). The process of borrowing intensified in the late 1950s (probably due to the widening of contacts between the Soviet Union and Western countries) and has been steady and uninterrupted up to the present moment. Borrowing takes place chief-

¹⁰ Балдунчикс Ю. Историко-хронологическая характеристика англизмов в латышском языке // *Baltu valodas senāk un tagad*. Rīga, 1985. L. 52–59.

Anglicismu funkcionālais raksturojums mūsdienu latviešu valodā. LPSR ZA Vēstis. 1981. Nr. 11. L. 67–78.

Jaunākie anglicismi latviešu valodā // *Latviešu valodas kultūras jautājumi*. 16. laid. Rīga, 1980. L. 33–39.

ly through the media of written sources. The most notable influence of English can be observed in the terminology of radioelectronics, computer science and technology, genetics and in the field of politics, sports, popmusic and jazz. After World War II English loanwords enter Latvian mainly (but not only) through Russian, e. g. such words as *sammits* (summit meeting), *digitāls* (digital) have penetrated into Latvian independently.

Summing up the present paper, it can be said that in the past Latvian obviously experienced a greater West-European linguistic impact. There had already been published eight dictionaries of foreign words in Latvian (first in 1878) at the time the first dictionary of such a type came out in Lithuanian (1907) – partly it can be explained by the ban on publications in Lithuanian from the 1860s till 1904. If we count entries with the letter “A” in the pre-war encyclopaedias („Latviešu konversācijas vārdnīca“ and „Lietuviškoji Enciklopedija“) the number of foreign words (of West-European origin) is greater in the Latvian encyclopaedia (approx. 530 words) if compared with that of Lithuanian (approx. 430 words). Present-day Lithuanian and Latvian have got almost an equal number of West-European loanwords (foreign words). The ways of borrowing, however, have been different, as Lithuanian had and still has a marked tendency towards Slavic intermediaries and adaptation models, whereas Latvian had a dominant German mediation in the past and more equally balanced channels of intermediation and models of adaptation in the 20th century.

RIETUMEIROPĀ UN BALTIJĀ: VALODU KONTAKTU VEIDI UN LEKSISKIE AIZGUVUMI

Kopsavilkums

Kontakts starp Rietumeiropas un baltu (lietuviešu un latviešu) valodām lielā mērā noteikuši vēsturiskie apstākļi. Vācu valoda bija pirmā Rietumeiropas valoda, kas izplatīja savu ietekmi baltu valodu areālā; ievērojami lielāka šī ietekme bija tur, kur vācu valodai bija dominējošās valodas statuss (Latvijā, Lietuvas rietumdaļā). Romāņu valodām un angļu valodai nav bijis izvērstu, tiešu kontaktu ar baltu valodām; ļoti ierobežoti tiešie kontakti mutvārdu komunikācijas līmenī bija iespējami ostas pilsētās. Leksikas aizgūšanas intensitāti vienmēr ietekmējuši ekstralingvistiskie, sociolingvistiskie un lingvistiskie faktori. Romāņu aizgūvumi ar vācu un poļu valodas starpniecību sāka ienākt 16. un 17. gadsimtā, to lielākā aktivitāte vērojama 19. gadsimta 2. pusē un 20. gadsimta sākumā. Anglicismu slānis ir jaunāks, toties mūsdienās tas papildinās visintensīvāk.