INTED 2020

14th International Technology, Education and Development Conference

2-4 March, 2020 - Valencia (Spain)

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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EXTRA LINGUISTIC FACTORS BEHIND LEXICAL CHANGE IN MODERN ENGLISH, SPANISH AND GERMAN

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Abstract

This paper aims to present the reasons for lexical change in modern English, Spanish and German. Grammar and phonetics within a language are relatively closed systems, whereas the lexicon of any language is determined and adapted to the constant changes from both the community where the language is used, but also from the global influence. Therefore, the lexical system is a rather open system, which is a logical consequence of our ever-changing world. This paper will present and discuss both internal (linguistic) and external (extra linguistic) factors as reasons for language change. The focus, however, will be on exploring the extra linguistic factors related to lexical change, lexical addition and loss in an era of increasing global technological improvements and mobility. The sociolinguistic, political, contact induced influence, historical, technological motivation and other external factors will be discussed in the paper as the extra linguistic motivation that lies behind this process of language change in the mentioned three languages. The reasons for the constant change of languages is difficult to determine. The same global influence often serves as different factor in different languages or communities. The paper will compare the motivation for lexical change in these three languages and it would finally provide an insight of the most influenced fields and spheres of life where innovations and alterations occur.

Keywords: Lexical change, English language, Spanish language, German language, extra linguistic factor.

1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE CHANGE

The inevitability of change has been commented on by linguists, philosophers and poets through the ages. As far back as the sixth century, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus's saying 'Everything is in flux' to Willian Butler Yeats statement 'time and the world are ever in fight' suggest that language, like the entire world, is part of the wheel of change. (Aitchison, 2001). Linguists have the task to formulate, codify and standardize the language. Robert Lowth, a bishop in his 'A short introduction to English grammar', first published in 1762, not intentionally, wrote a prescriptive grammar of the English language. However, a distinction must be made between the prescriptive grammar of Bishop Lowth and the descriptive one of modern linguists for whom the rules are not externally imposed but reflect on principles or conventions used by the speakers of the language. Changes have been treated differently in time. The changes were not favourably looked upon by traditionalists, as in "I see no absolute Necessity why any Language would be perpetually changing" by Jonathan Swift in his 'Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue'. However, the more we are open to communicate freely, the more inevitably the language changes. In modern times, linguists, anthropologists and other related scientists predominately accept change positively. For example, Ottenheimer (2005) claims that "The important thing to remember about change is that, as long as people are using a language, that language will undergo some change."

2 THE DIVISION OF FACTORS OF LANGUAGE CHANGE

This paper will focus on the factors that are seen as reasons for the change of the lexicons of modern English, Spanish and German. The lexical systems of any language are open, they are living entities that evolve. The process of change within a language's lexicon can be internally or externally motivated. The two extreme points of lexical change are lexical loss and lexical addition. There are other changes that occur in between, processes in which linguistically specified word meanings are modified in use. These processes are semantic broadening or narrowing, semantic extension or intension or semantic shift. Their meanings are made more general or more specific, proper nouns gaining the status of common nouns or vice versa, respectively. Semantic shift occurs when a given word shifts in denotation without being accompanied with syntactic change.

In the explanation of linguistic change, the factors are often described as internal and external. According to Romaine (1982) the explanation begins with the relevance of sociolinguistics to historical linguistics by using the past to explain the present. She makes a clear distinction between internal and external factors. Other linguists, however, dispute the fruitfulness or subjectivity of this clear-cut distinction. Dorian (1993) refers to the dichotomies being dangerous, in phrases like 'internally motivated change' and 'externally motivated change'. It is not always possible to determine whether the causation was internally or externally motivated. The internal factors provide for the creation of new lexemes by the means of utilization of native resources. This primarily refers to the process of compounding which involves two or more lexemes to be combined to form a single word, e.g. *manful* from *man* and *flu* to refer to the modern man today who seemingly overreacts and exaggerates the seriousness of an illness. A word's referential meaning can be extended to a variety of potential referents. Due to these possible extensions, words can be broadened with an additional figurative meaning. As an example related to our topic, we can mention the additional figurative meaning of *smart* as an adjective collocating with devices like phones, boards, etc. Figurative extensions are usually grounded in some similarity or contiguity between the core referent and the new referent within the framework provided by an application of the semantic oppositions of the source domain to the realm or domain of the target referents (Kronenfeld 1996)

The external factors are the ones made through contact with other languages or dialects. The factors originating from the society are referred to as extra linguistic factors.

3   EXTRA LINGUISTIC FACTORS TO LANGUAGE CHANGE

Changing syntactic rules or changes in phonetics in a language will definitely disturb its balance. Whereas, the lexicon of any language is determined and adapted to the constant changes from both the community where the language is used, but also from the global influence. In this modern world, it is only logical to understand and accept the imposed changes from the society. The sociolinguistic, political, contact induced influence, historical, technological motivation and other external factors are often seen as extra linguistic motivation for lexical change in the mentioned three languages.

3.1   Social media

In the modern online communication tools such as *emojis, memes* and *gifs* have played an important part. Social media and online communication have been producing many new meaning to even existing words. Such example is the phrase *on fleek*. The word originally applied to perfectly-groomed eyebrows, but today it's used to mean basically "perfectly done" or "exactly right."Other examples that fall into this category of social media terms would be *influencer*, *tweet, hashtag, google* as a verb, *'e'* as a prefix, etc. New actions and activities also needed to be named in order to describe them, from *multi-slacking* – the act of having multiple windows on the screen that makes you look like you are working but in fact you are not, to *fracking* and *vaping*. Other examples include *ghosting* people meaning avoiding them. The list is truly quite excessive which only suggests that social media is an area of our modern world that is very productive in creation of new lexemes.

When it comes to this category of social media terms, it is important to note that due to the default use of English in science and technology and globalization in general, many of the English new words are copied into Spanish. Here are some of the most common used English-derived words: *hacker, streaming, tuit* meaning *"tweet", google, googlear* or *guglear* – to google, *clic* – a click, as on a computer, *clicar* - to click, as on a computer, *cracker* - information pirate etc. Recently, the Real Academia Española has added two interesting definitions for the word "inglés". The first one is related to humor, characterized by the sharp irony and concealed sarcasm attributed to the English, and the second one is related to punctuality meaning rigorous, exact.

3.2   Technological inventions and smart devices

Technological inventions have significantly marked our modern age. Many words were coined, completely arbitrarily invented to come to refer to the new inventions. Starting from *drones* to the *Bitcoins* to *fidget spinners*. This is a process that has always existed and it has been a field that has been productive, but inarguably never in such extent.

As mentioned above, many English words, referring to the new inventions, are widespread in Spanish. For instance, the words *el dron* and *el fidget spinner* are normal loanwords from English.

3.3 Shorthands and other word shortening processes

The word formation process of word shortening has never been so productive. Such examples include: *YOLO* – you only live once and subsequently Yolo as a verb to indicate the great fun someone is having; *LOL* – laugh out loud; *AMA* - Ask Me Anything; *ELI5* - explain like I'm five (an expression to ask for something to be clarified in a simple manner). Now more than ever, all three mentioned languages have shown great increase of producing abbreviations and acronyms. Here are some examples in German: KH (Krankenhaus- hospital), LKW (Lastkraftwagen - truck or lorry, motor vehicle), WM (Weltmeisterschaft - world championship), SoWi (Sozialwissenschaften - social sciences), U-Bahn (Untergrundbahn - metro, subway). Common examples of abbreviations and acronyms in Spanish include: *TQM* - Te quiero mucho (I love you a lot); *MDI* - Me da igual (I don't care); *PTI* - Para tu información (For your information); *Pq* - Porque/ Por qué (Because/ Why). Probably the most common form of word shortening is the use of initials. Texting has become more popular than phone calls to communicate, so the shorthand slang has become as common as everyday language, in this case everyday Spanish. Texting in Spanish can cause some letters to disappear or to be replaced ("C" and "q" become "k" and "Ch" becomes "x". Such examples include: Estoy - *Toy* (I am); Todo - *Too* (All); Quiero - *Kiero* (I want); Como - *Komo* (Like/ How); Aquí - *Aki* (Here); Escucha – *Kuxa* (Listen - an example of the disappearing "es" and the replacement of "ch" with "x"). Most common Spanish texting lingo include: *BB* - Bebé (baby); *Bnx* - Buenas noches (good night); *Bss* – Besos (kisses); *Cdo* – Cuando (when); *Dcr* – Decir (say, tell); *Grax* – Gracias (thank you); *Hla* – Hola (hello); *Kn* – Quien (who); *Nph* - No puedo hablar (I can't talk); *Npn* - No pasa nada (It's okay); Xq – Porque (because); Salu2 – Saludos (greetings) etc.

3.4 Borrowings and calques

Loan translations or calques were common in English but have been recessive since. In Modern German however a good example is *Wolkenkratzer* from *skyscraper*. When loans are accepted in a language they undergo modifications following the rules of the accepting language. For instance, German vocabulary has a particular principle of compounding, for instance in German *Speiseröhre* means 'a pipe through which food reaches the stomach' whereas English *oesophagous* is a Greek loanword, since English differs in this principle. German tends to be productive in the acceptance of loans from other languages. For instance the word *pullover* is a normal loan from English, but the word *Pullunder* is a German creation, which does not exist in English, based on the analysis of the original loan as pull and over where the replacement of the preposition over by under indicates a sleeveless pullover. Furthermore, German is more open in using English lexemes to create new compounds, as in the word *Dressman* which is obviously reached by combining the verb to dress and the noun man. Such word does not exist in English.

– Verb Flagge zeigen 1 (idiomatic) to show the flag.

– Eistee - from Eis ("ice") + Tee ("tea"). Calque of English iced tea.

– Verb hochladen- hoch + laden, a calque of English upload.

– Wochenende from Woche + -n- + Ende, calque of English weekend.

– Moorhuhn - Moor + Huhn, a calque of English moorhen.

There are many examples of common phrases in Spanish that are calques, words translated from other languages. Spanish has taken calques from many languages, but most often from English. This is logical because of the structural similarities between the two languages. For instance, the traditional English word *collect* (to gather together objects), in Spanish results in the calque *colectar* (to gather funds). Therefore, here we will look at some popularly used examples of calques from English: *aerobús* - calque of English *airbus*, *enfatizar* - calque of English *emphasize*, *lista negra* - calque of English *blacklist*, *politicización* - calque of English *politicization*, *teléfono celular* - calque of English *cellular phone*, *usado* - calque of English *used*, *luna de miel* - calque of English *honeymoon*, *perros calientes* - calque of English *hot dog*, *conferencia de alto nivel* - calque of English *high level conference* etc. Sometimes, it is difficult to differentiate between a calque and a word in its traditional form because a similar word may be found in both languages but with different meanings. A good example is the word *asistencia* in Spanish, which means "attendance" in English, but when used in its calque form the meaning changes to "assistance".

3.5 Politics

Politics can be another area of modern life that can be productive of introducing new words, simply following the new unfolding changes that occur. The American Dialect Society has selected and recognized as new words: *9/11* (2001), *weapons of mass destruction* (2002), *subprime* (2007). The increasingly popular topic of environmental awareness and environmental policies has produced many new words and phrases such as *tree-hugger*, *eco-friendly*, *carbon footprint*, *greenwashing*, *locavore*, *eco-terrorism* and *green collar jobs*, *gas-guzzler*, *sustainability*, *organic*, *capture* and *hybrid*. Most of the political phenomena have been accepted and adopted as international and they cause little problem for translation. Some latest examples that can be included here can be *Brexit* and *Youthquake*. Other new coinages that are mostly related to politics in news feeds are *post-truth* or *deepfake*.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The reasons for the constant change of languages is difficult to determine. The same global influence often serves as different factor in different languages or communities. The paper was an attempt to compare the motivation for lexical change in these three languages. Its purpose is to make language users and language teachers more aware and conscious about the changes in the lexicon but also to inspire acceptance of the changes not only of new words but also of grammar adaptation. The linguist and historian Ann Curzak, who has a positive attitude to language change, emphasizes the importance of language change and linguistic diversity and their acceptance. Namely, she claims that any word, whether is a slang or seems not correct because it does not appear in a dictionary, if it is used by the speakers of the language, that word is real. Luckily, the lexicographers and the dictionary editors do try to keep up with the changes that we, the speakers make. For instance, LOL got into the Oxford English dictionary, or defriend can be found as an entry in Oxford American dictionary.

Words are adopted or invented into a language for reasons of prestige, to name a new notion or object or to fill in a lexical gap, e.g. marine as the adjective to sea. When the native word and the loan one are synonyms without any register differences, the borrowed one seems to be left out with time. Nevertheless, should they acquire a specific and distinctive denotation that a native word do not possess or register preference, they tend to survive.

Regardless of the factors that influenced any lexical change, be that an addition of a coinage or undergoing a semantic change to a word's meaning, it is important to become conscious that all these three languages are changing in a more rapid pace than ever before. This process may be due to remote and vast geographical areas where these languages are spoken, as well as the great number of speakers using it as a mother tongue or an official language of daily communication. The greater the number of users, the chances of being more prone to changes are larger. Apart from the focus on lexical changes in this paper, it is vital to mention the changes in grammar that are happening. These changes are perceived differently. Some people react negatively and see them as ignorance or sloppiness, as in the frequent use of *disinterested* instead of the correct use of *uninterested*. Others are more open and accepting. According to the sociolinguistic studies, the spread of language change is a social phenomenon and it has proved that changes associated with prestige groups have a greater chance of being adopted. For instance, the current USA president Trump has been investigated by linguists for his unique use of language, the simplicity of his vocabulary, the incoherence in his speeches and tweets. Yet, some linguists believe that this simplicity would change the normally expected use of correct and well-polished use of language used by other presidents; others argue that there is no 'danger' of that. This new interaction of language and the influence of the Internet on the language has expanded the field of linguistics to a branch of Internet linguistics, which explores how social media influences language and how and where new words are infiltrated. According to popular mythology, the Internet will be bad for the future of language--technospeak will rule, standards will be lost, and creativity diminished as globalization imposes sameness. David Crystal is one of the foremost authorities who has used the Internet for research purposes from its earliest manifestations on language. He argues that the Internet is a dramatic expansion of the range and variety of language and is provides opportunities for personal creativity. Gretchen McCullochis another Internet linguist who believes that English is not a precious urn to be maintained rather than a splendidly "living, moving" thing.

A distinction of notions of language standardization and planning with the language change and alteration has to be present since real-life language use is much more complex and uncontrollable than any theoretical prescriptions.

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