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Linguistic Borrowing: Functions and role in Language Development and Classroom Teaching.

Abstract

Linguistic Borrowing refers to the phenomenon of transferring linguistic constructions which may include: lexical, phonology, morphological and syntactic from a “donor” language to a “recipient” language as a result of contacts between communities speaking different languages. Accordingly, borrowing words from other languages allow for the expansion of language’s lexicon and can provide insights into cultural and historical connections between communities and can go a long way in enriching the vocabulary of a language. Our concern in this research work is therefore to examine the functions and roles of linguistic borrowing in language development and classroom teaching. Our data collection was through the secondary method in which we made use of the library and the internet. The views and findings of other researchers and scholars in relation to the topic were extremely reviewed. Findings from the study also revealed that: borrowing of words is a common and beneficial linguistic function and if well applied, could yield positive results in a language classroom. For instance, it helps in clarification and elaboration on themes, promoting sharing in the classroom, and creating positive classroom rapport, and ensuring that the session runs smoothly.

Keywords: Linguistics, borrowing, adaptation, communication and development.

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Introduction

Linguistic borrowing according to Olaoye (2002) in Surajo and Ahmad (2016) is “sociolinguistic situation in which a word or phrase which has been taken from one language is used in another language” It is also looked at as a word adopted, often with some modification of its form, from one language into another. In details, it is referred to the process of speakers adopting words from a source, language into their native language which could be either lexical borrowing or cultural borrowing. Some examples of borrowed words and phrases from French to English are: haute couture, croissant, baguette, cordon bleu and a la carte. These are directly borrowed from French and are pronounced in a similar way. We also have words like “Amateur” meaning ‘lover’ or “enthusiast” and in English, it refers to someone who plays sports. Coach is also from the French word “coche” meaning a horse-drawn coach, just to mention but a few.

The necessity for borrowing in linguistics: It is believed that languages borrow primarily to communicate, implying that it occurs out of necessity or need where a language does not have a readily available word for something. Sometimes, however, a language does not possess all the words necessary for it to capture all its experiences. At such times, it has to

either borrow foreign words or expressions from other languages that come in contact with it. Such borrowed items help in enriching, explaining and developing the language. Karuru (2013).

Historical linguistics believes that, Linguistic borrowing is important for historical linguistics. For instance, the borrowing of Latin words into the ancestor of modern English can provide information on when and where speakers of that language had contacts with speakers of Latin. (19 mars 2024). They go further to stress that such historical information would not have been available if linguistic data is the only kind of evidence because we do not have written records for those early periods. Accordingly, if languages borrow words from each other, this may be the indication that these languages have had contact in the past, and could be used as evidence for the classification of languages. This would also help a language learner to know which language is closely related to which and so to plan the study of languages.

According to Bolton (1982) borrowing words from other languages allow, for the expansion of a language's lexicon and can provide insights into cultural and historical connections between communities. And that, whenever one examines words in a given language and explains how they have evolved from structures and sounds of that language, the effects of borrowing and the evidence it provides for language development is clear.

Furthermore, the ability to use different words or phrases to convey the same meaning in a given context when neither two nor more words or expressions are interchangeable, could be submitted for each other without changing the overall message of significance of the communication. This concept is fundamental to understanding the flexibility and richness of language, as it allows speakers and writers to choose from a variety of linguistic options to effectively convey their thoughts and ideas. For instance, in an English –dominant culture, immigrants might speak exclusively in English to strangers but revert to a mixture of English and their native language around family, and other members of their speech community. Bolton (1982).

Different types of linguistic borrowing can occur depending on the specific situations. Sometimes it is empowering and allows people to express their authentic selves – a person might revert to a native tongue when they feel comfortable. Other times, it indicates an uneven power dynamic – a person might take on the language or accent of an entrenched power group so they aren't singled out or thought of as a lesser-than. LinkedIn (2023). These types of linguistic borrowing may include phonological and lexical borrowing. Phonological, referring to the process by which a language adopts sounds or phonetic features from another language. Then lexical, referring to the adoption of individual or sets of words from another language or dialect which could include roots and affixes sounds, collocations and grammatical processes.

What is the function of linguistic borrowing?

Sometimes, however, a language does not possess all the words necessary for it to capture all its experiences. At such times, it has to borrow words and expressions from other languages that come in contact with it. Such borrowed items help in enriching, expanding and developing the language. Linguistic borrowing does not only replenish the lexicon but also establishes certain changes in the word-stock structure in the number and composition of different groupings of words, and their linguistic relationships. It also contributes to the variability of lexical units. It largely determines this variability, which leads to the formation of homonymous, synonymous and antonymous relations in the vocabulary of the languages in question. AWEJ (2021).

Importance of linguistic borrowing:

Borrowing words from other languages allow for the expansion of a language's lexicon and can provide insights into cultural and historical connections between communities. Bolton (1982). Borrowing words from other languages can enrich vocabulary and facilitate communication between speakers of different languages and cultures especially in the context of globalization. Metcalf (2002). Additionally, borrowing words allows for the adaptation and incorporation of foreign concepts into a language. Furthermore, the process of borrowing and adapting words from other languages can shed light on the complex dynamics of language contact and change, providing insights into the interactions and influences between different languages. Nicoll (2002). Finally, borrowing words can be a cost-effective strategy for sharing lexical information across languages as demonstrated by the development of models that utilize borrowed forms to improve machine translation. Benavides (2022).

The role borrowing plays on the development of untranslatable words in different languages?

Borrowing plays a significant role in the development of untranslatable words in different languages. When languages come into contact with each other, they exchange lexical units, resulting in the borrowing of words from one language to the other. This borrowing is influenced by various socio-cultural and socio linguistic conditions, as well as the need to fill gaps in the target language's vocabulary. Borrowing of words can occur in technical fields, where foreign words are used to designate concepts that do not exist in the target language's system. Metcalf (2002).

In addition, borrowing can be influenced by globalization, leading to the adoption of words from other languages. The process of borrowing is essential for language evolution and the growth of lexicons, as it allows for the incorporation of new concepts and ideas from other cultures. Karuru (2013).

The need of borrowing words in classroom teaching

It is crucial to mention that through lexical borrowing, the students not only develop vocabulary and linguistic elements but they improve the four main skills, reasoning and thinking, since they are able to understand written and oral text, and improve communication competence as well as they are able to analyze and apply new words in context. Benavdes (2022).

It is a good strategy for effective teaching when it is intentional and when both the teacher and the students use it to their advantage. For example, teachers can allow borrowed words when students are learning new grammar or difficult concepts but can ask students to use the target language only when they are reviewing.

However, when borrowing of words is done in excess, it could discourage students from communicating as much as possible in the target language. After all, if their teacher can comfortably talk to them in their native tongue, why should they bother using the target language at all?

Another point to be considered, also in this respect, is that the teachers' competence in the native language of students should be able to play a role, if positive contributions of linguistic borrowings are expected. Coffre (2022).

In supporting the need of borrowing of words in classrooms, Skiba (1997) suggests that in the circumstances where linguistic borrowing is used due to an inability of expression, it serves for continuity in speech instead of presenting interference in language. In this respect, borrowing stands to be a supporting element in communication of information and in

social interaction; therefore serves for communicative purposes in the way that it is used as a tool for transference of meaning.

Furthermore, the functions of the teacher's idea of borrowing words as seen above stand a supportive explanation for the strong sides of the phenomenon. Generally, all these lead to the idea that the use of borrowing of words somehow, builds a bridge better understanding and clarification and may be considered as an important element in language teaching when used efficiently.

Additionally, the teacher should allow students to borrow when they have difficulty continuing a conversation in the target language. This is one instance where borrowing can help rather than hinder. Borrowing words to bridge familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary can help students become more comfortable conversing spontaneously in the target language. For example, if students cannot remember one word, the teacher can allow them to substitute it with the word in their native language in order to continue the conversation. Otherwise, they may get so hung up on that one word that they lose the flow of their overall message. Afterward, the teacher teaches or reviews the missing word and discusses target language synonyms or explanations the students might have used to get their point across without borrowing.

From the fore going discussion, it is observed that borrowing of words is a common and beneficial linguistic function and if well applied, could yield positive results in a language classroom. Students and teachers can encourage the borrowing of words (mostly from their dialects) in the classroom to meet a variety of functions such as equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control. Linguistic borrowing happens in different areas of a sentence, before or after a clause in inter-sentential, inside a clause and non-intentional in intra-sentential and as a tag inside a clause in tag/extra-sentential.

Linguistic borrowing has many benefits in education. These benefits can be creating a comfortable classroom environment, helping students learn new grammar or vocabulary, and creating effective communication with parents, students, administrators and the greater community. Mattson and Barenhult (1999). We have also realized that students could borrow words to show what they know or to fill gaps in their knowledge of the target language or language of the classroom.

Finally, we have seen that the use of borrowed words in the classroom helps to resolve confusion or misunderstanding regarding complex grammar and vocabulary and helps in clarifying lessons. Arthur, 1996. Arthur, goes further to explain that bilingual borrowing plays a pertinent role in foreign language learning to compensate for deficiencies for promoting language proficiency. This method could therefore serves different functions in the language classroom, maintains the flow of conversation and facilitate communication, assist learners in understanding linguistic forms, attention to lessons and encourage engagement in activities, create social classroom environment and establish interpersonal relationship between teachers and learners in the classroom. It also makes students feel that the teacher understands their linguistic cultural background and can allow them use words from their own native language to aid their understanding. This implies that, Linguistic borrowing could be a very important strategy or method when effectively used in the classroom. This is because it is helpful for clarifying and elaborating on themes, promoting sharing in classroom, creating positive classroom rapport, and ensuring that the session runs smoothly.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, we have been able to realize that, Linguistic borrowing primarily is to communicate; borrowing therefore, occurs out of the need where a language cannot flow, considering the fact that, the first success of any lesson in the classroom situation is communication. Understanding creates a comfortable classroom environment, students learn new words and there effective communication which brings about success in the learning and teaching. Therefore, if this strategy is properly applied in the classroom teaching, there is no doubt that both teachers and students could achieve greatly.

We also recommend that apart from the contribution of borrowed words in developing a language, they should also be used in upgrading and updating other languages,

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