

Influence of Cross-Cultural Communication on the Vocabulary Teaching of Languages-Taking English French and Chinese as an Example

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Abstract: Language is a convey of culture and means of communication. It is born for and grows in performing its innate functions. This fact finds evidence in any language in the world, which is exemplified in this paper. For long centuries cross-cultural communication has enriched the English lexicon, which in turn has influenced French and Chinese by interactions between them. The contact of any two different cultures inevitably involves interactions of their languages. In the whole process of interchange and interaction, it is also inevitable that a thriving culture is in the position. The stronger one will impose or spontaneously lend words to the language of another culture by their language interaction. So through the background of cross-cultural communication, it would be helpful for us to analyze and understand the interactions between different languages. For historical reasons there are too many French words intruded into English vocabulary. But with the development of Britain, English has gradually played an important role in international business and communication. Also the same is true of Chinese. No matter which kind of language is introduced into another, loanwords are the main type. Similarly in turn the lexicons of different languages interactions make different cultures develop to some extent, and it should be considered in our vocabulary teaching.

1. Introduction

Cross-cultural communication is no stranger to human history. From the nomadic tribes in the infancy of human civilization to business travelers and missionaries of modern times, this process has been going on for many centuries [1]. At present, however, this phenomenon occurs on a large

scale, either in terms of participation, or in terms of importance, owing chiefly to the tremendous development in the means of transportation and communication, which greatly enhances people's chances of meeting each other as well as their mobility."

Cultural contacts will inevitably lead to language contact. Mutual integration of languages causes the enrichment of lexicon, which is the result of process of language contact. For each language, the relative stability is the part of grammar and the most active part is vocabulary. Therefore, in language contact the most vulnerable part to be affected is also vocabulary [2]. In any two different cultures' contact, there must be one culture stronger and develop faster than the other. So an imposed or spontaneous lending and borrowing may happen between the two languages. One is regarded as intruder, and the other as the recipient [3], as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Lending and borrowing between two languages

2. The Multi-Lingual Integration in English

In a broad array of modern English vocabulary, there is more than 80 percent words borrowed from other languages to English vocabulary, with synonymies, which make English richer and more meaningful. So they are more psychological identified and inclusive, happily absorbing from various cultures loanwords [4]. The history of English language shows, in large measure, that the development of English is a process that borrowed from other languages. Rooted in the multi-national culture background, no doubt barriers were brought into the cross-culture communication [5]. "Language does not exist without culture. There is no language without culture." "English vocabulary is an important sign, reflecting the interest of an era and a change in the cultural mindset. In the evolution of human history of each era, some features come out through special words, loanwords undoubtedly has played a role of adding fuel to the flames in the language development and cross-culture communication." It is worth noting that the development of words in the English vocabulary also reflected a cross-cultural communication as a social function [6].

3. Interactions between English and French/Chinese and Influences on their Lexicons

3.1. French words in English

3.3.1. Extensive Borrowings

All languages borrow words from other languages. Without exception, English has absorbed a large number of vocabularies from the Latin, Greek and other languages in the process of its development[7]. But French is the most conspicuous and played an important role in the history of English language, as shown in Figure 2.

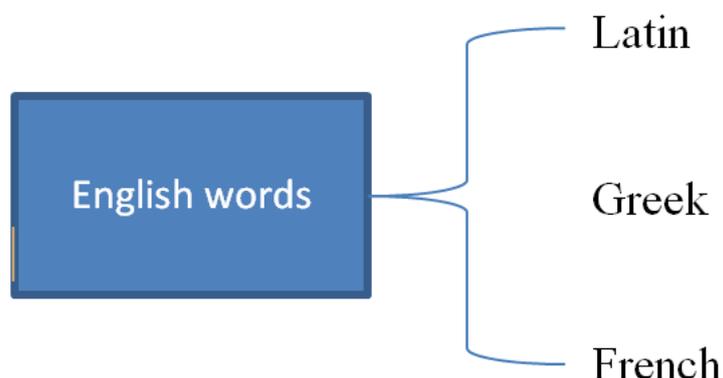


Figure 2. Borrowing of English words from other languages

In fact, in English, French words can be seen everywhere. It can be said that we are talking about the English with French taste. In English there is as much as a quarter of French vocabulary. For the most commonly used 5000 English words, analysis shows the importance of the French[8]. In 1000 most frequently used English words, 11 percent is French origin. In the rest of the most commonly used 4000 English words, approximately 46 percent is French origin. The high frequency use of French words can explain why a well-educated British or American can generally read French newspapers, even though they did not learn French before[9].

The introduction of French words into English has two periods: the Middle English and the modern English[10]. After the battle of 1066 the Norman who speak French invaded England. It is an important event in the development of English history. After the Norman Conquest, Britain society was under the rule of Norman kings and nobles who took a minority part. They used their own language—French to rule Britain. So the French way of life and civilization gradually affected the Britain[11]. The impact of conquerors has also naturally reflected in the language. Norman conqueror had ruled Britain for three centuries, using French. French was the official language. In the palace, in the political activities, in the barracks, or in the French trade, people all used French. Britain's upper class and educated people began to use French to make themselves commensurate with the rulers[12]. The early borrowing were words used generally in everyday life, such as mutton (mouton), pork (porc), dine(diner), etc. A brief analysis of them reveals the contempt that French conquerors harbored and displayed towards the English people, for they deemed the words used by the conquered people low and vulgar while their French noble and graceful; so they refused to use the local words in all cases[13].

Meanwhile, in the rural areas ordinary public still used and spoke English. Gradually, Norman and Anglo-Saxon fused together[14]. Norman lost the territory on the mainland, and they started to settle in England as their permanent home. To the late of the 14th century, English regained its status as the dominant language, and government officials, the courts have also started using English[15]. At that time, the English was quite different from that of Norman Conquest. Words like ordinary auxiliaries, pronouns, prepositions and conjunction almost all retained. But many French words and terms used by the Normans were introduced into English. During this period, there are about 10000 French words were introduced, of which 75 per cent of the vocabulary has been used so far. A large number of French words appear in Chaucer and other works of the British authors. Most of these words are nouns, adjectives, and verbs in the area of government, religion, justice, science and culture. During this period, the French words introduced in pronunciation were assimilated, and only phonetics experts can identify that they are foreign words. Such as:

(1)/i/ in French changed into /ai/ in English eg: final strive arrive

(2)/u:/ in French changed into /au/ in English eg: spouse, rout, rouse

On the other hand, some active French affixes were introduced into English such as: -age, -able, -ess, -ment, -ance that constituted a large number of new English words.

For example: shortage, likeable, shepherdess, fulfillment, hindrance.

Thanks to the glamorous achievements French artists and diplomats made in various domains, words about arts, law, religion, and politics were introduced into English in large numbers. While some of these loanwords had counterparts in English, they either replaced the local words or co-existed comfortably with them.

3.3.2. Loan Words

The loanwords may be classified into the following types, as shown in Figure 3:

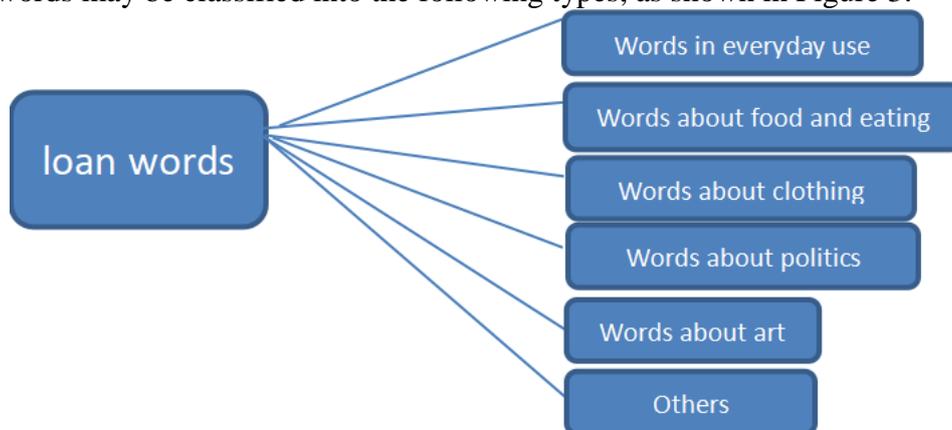


Figure 3. The classification of loanwords

(1) Words in everyday use

Au revoir! — See you again! or Goodbye!

Bonjour! —(lit.), Good Day! or Hello!

Bon voyage! — Have a good trip!

Comment allez-vous? — How are you!

N'est-ce pas? — Isn't it? used after a statement.

Répondez s'il vous plait.— Please reply. It is widely used in correspondence.

(2) Words about food and eating

Bon app éit! — Have a good meal!

bonbon — a type of round boiled sweet

soupe du jour — the soup of the day

(3) Words about clothing

chemise — loose-fitting, saclike dress

corsage — small spray of flowers worn by a woman

boutique — small shop selling clothes and other articles of the latest fashion

(4) Words about politics

noblesse oblige — benevolent honorable behavior considered to be the responsibility of persons of high birth or rank (French proverb: Nobility has the responsibility to bring honor to its station./The nobly born must nobly do.)

cart blanche — unlimited authority(literally, blank card)

cause celebre — an issue arousing widespread controversy or heated public debate

Liberte; Egalite; Fraternite — Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (motto of the French Republic)

(5) Words about art

belles lettres — literature regarded for its aesthetic value rather than its didactic or informative content

son et lumiere — grave accent or theatrical entertainment presented at night in a historic, usually outdoor setting, using recorded sound, lighting, and other effects to reflect the history of the place

chef d’oeuvre — masterpiece in art, literature, etc.

(6) Others

dê à vu — literally, “already seen”; impression or illusion of having seen or experienced something before

douceur de vivre — sweetness of life

je ne sais quoi — an indefinable (usually compelling) quality (literally, “I don’t know what.”)

joie de vivre — joy of living

From the example above we could see some general rules in the absorption of the French words into the English language, which fall roughly into the following three categories, as shown in Figure 4.

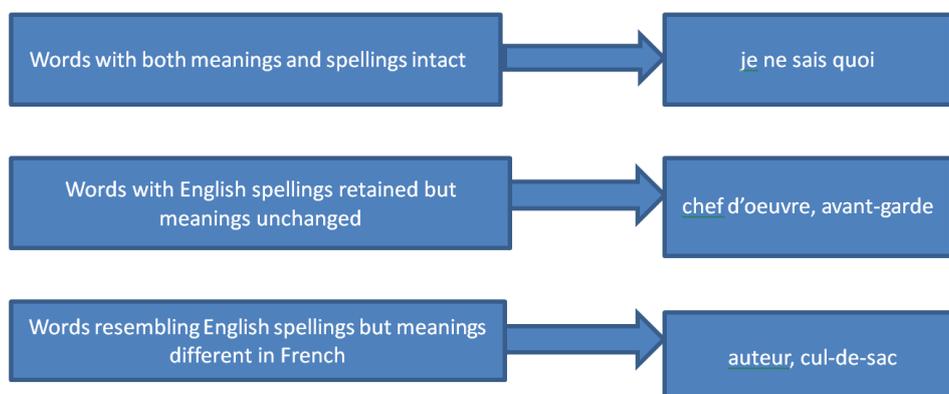


Figure 4. Absorption of the French words into English

Some words in English that originated from French but have acquired quite different meanings. Learners of these two languages must pay special attention to such false friends. Some typical examples are as follows.

auteur — meaning “author” in French, but “film director who controls everything about the film, or other controller of an artistic situation” in English (Actually, the English connotation is derived from French, or French film theory.)

le mot just — “the right word”, which means the same literal thing in French, but it isn’t used in the particular context as English-speakers use it

3.2. English Words in Chinese

3.2.1. Historical View

Loan words are the inevitable product of exchange among the various nationalities in political, economic, cultural and science and technology areas. Language master Edward Sapir once said: “language as culture is rarely self-sufficient.” The need of communication makes people who speak a language directly or indirectly contact. “The simplest impact of a language to another language is word ‘borrowing’.” With the development of reform and opening up to the world, loanwords in Chinese not only changed greatly in speed but also in the number. Of course looking at the history of the Chinese vocabulary, the absorbing of foreign words has never stopped. With the winning of May 4 Movement a new upsurge in the history of the translation appeared. Many books on western

natural science and social science have been translated into Chinese. Early loanwords were chiefly adopted via Cantonese, Amoy, and Wu Chinese, since people living in Hong Kong and Shanghai and other coastal areas were in the forefront of foreign trade, bearing the brunt of Western aggression, and were more exposed to Western culture, the result being that the English language influenced their local dialects. The Chinese words, quite different from the alphabetic language, also found their way into English. Certainly English loanwords introduced into Chinese vocabulary emerged like bamboo shoots after a spring rain such as logic, lawyers, philosophy that all appeared during this period. In the contemporary period, English loanwords that grow more rapidly have gradually become a part of Chinese vocabulary, which cannot be ignored such as the words used in daily life: sofa, playing card, model, salad, vitamin and cartoons etc. On the other hand, with the development of network more and more network words, like the Internet, download, rookie, hackers, blog and so are being accepted by more and more people.

3.2.2. Loan Words

Roughly speaking, loanwords from English can be absorbed into Chinese, though the latter, as an offshoot of the Sino-Tibetan language family, is very different from the former. The absorption occurs in three ways, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Loanwords from English to Chinese

Transliteration words	sofa(shafa), coffee(kafei), bus(bashi), radar(leida), vitamin(weitamin), AID(aizibing), sauna (sangnayu), hamburger (hanbaobao), blog(boke) hacker(heike)
Literal translation	Oxford(niujin), wireless (wuxiandian), hotdog(regou), giraffe(changjinglu), kangaroo(), boomerang (feibiao)
Intact loans	VCD: video compact disk, similar to DVD; BoBo: bourgeois & Bohemia; CEO

In recent years, with the development of science, technology, and culture exchange the single-letter word has become a common international vocabulary such as: WTO, VIP, DIY, UNESCO and some also with number MP3, 3D. Another kind is the prototype English words such as: yahoo, Internet, OK. As international exchanges and the process of integration of world speed up, Chinese and English cumulative words constantly occur in our lives such as: “xiao” case, T “tai”, AA “zhi” and so on. As this category of words already include in some dictionaries such as Ci Hai and China Encyclopedia. In everyday life it is often can be heard that young people talked on the exotic things with these words. And more and more people accepted this kind of saying.

3.3. Chinese Words in English

Since reform and opening up to the outside world became the state policy of China at the end of the 1970s, China has been actively engaged in economic, scientific, and cultural exchanges with many countries. Particularly, those enjoyed advanced technology like the United States. In recent years, as China's economic development and the upgrading of its international influence, accompanied with the increasing of international exchange and Chinese resettlement overseas, the influence of Chinese on English becomes more and more great. Not only words from the Chinese vocabulary are directly applied into English, but also some expressions, which are called Chinese English, are gradually being accepted. And they have become customary usage in the habit of English. According to the statistics done by the World Language-monitoring organization, there are about twenty per cent of new English words from Chinese or Chinese English. In the Oxford English Dictionary, there are more than 1000 words in the source of Chinese language.

3.3.1. Examples Classified (Table 2)

Table 2. Examples from Chinese vocabulary to English

Through borrowing sound which is the largest proportion, some Chinese vocabulary entered English.	Cheong-sam, Confucius, Dingho, Fengshu, Ginseng, IChing, koolie, kowtow, Kungfu, Lao-tzu, Mah-jong, Sampan, Silk, Tai-chi, Tao, Tofu, Tong, Yin&Yang, Jiaozi, Lemonade, litchi, lama, longan, chop suey, typhoon, kaoliang, mao-tai, kylin, Pe-tsai, suan pan, dim sum, wonton, chow mein, and so on.
There are also loanwords through free translation	running dog, brainwashing, Hundred Flowers, Peking duck, opening-up and so on.
Some Chinese loanwords in English have much color of Chinese localization	Putonghua, Mu, Sheng, Jin , Liang, Yuan, Jiao, Fen and so on.
A small portion of Chinese words has become English so thoroughly that it is surprised to native English-speaking people as talking the origin of these words from Chinese	Ketchup

3.3.2. New Tendency

China's emergence in the world as a new economic power in recent years, together with its extensive contact with foreign countries, helps spread the Chinese and the Chinese culture. More and more people are coming to appreciate the fact that China has more to offer to the world, not only doctrines of yin and yang, feats and power of wushu, but also many other national treasures. A great interest in the old and thriving country—China who has an ever-increasing population—gives rise to an interesting phenomenon in the Western media. For the sake of retaining Chinese flavor in their reportage, newsmen tend to keep the words in pinyin rather than translate them in English. This may help arouse people's curiosity in the Chinese language and makes the life of translators easier.

A very interesting but a little complex example is "haigui" (literal meaning, sea turtle, transcription of the Chinese short form for haiwai guilai), which refers to those who once studied abroad and now have returned to China to pursue their career. It is not only an expression well known to the ordinary Chinese, but also has been picked up by foreign reporters. Example is found in *The Economist* (2003, Vol.3) that offers another interpretation of the world.

"... when China reopened its borders in 1979, few of those who gained a passport thought of even handing it back, thus turning into turtles, the Chinese nickname for those who later on came back (as turtles do to the beach where they were born)."

4. Conclusion

It is only natural that in the future we can expect more intensive and extensive exchanges between cultures, as well as new coinages and new loanwords in the vocabularies of different language. For the part of us Chinese, the younger generation, is better educated in English due to its being offered as a compulsory course in most schools throughout the country. They are generally influenced by the impression or misconception they have got from the mass media. And they are always more than ready to adopt English words (in most cases) without translation. Although linguists may frown upon this phenomenon, since excessive and indiscriminate borrowing will

end up impairing our mother tongue, especially its written form. In the predictable future, it will continue with the steady interchange between China and Western countries. Obviously, the exporting of Chinese into English does not have as smooth a path as the latter has enjoyed, chiefly because the former belongs to a very different language family, so these factors should be considered in the vocabulary teaching of languages.

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Data Availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The author states that this article has no conflict of interest.

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