

Socio-cultural variation in borrowability constraints: Fixedness and conventionality in contact situations

A. Seza Dođruöz & Eline Zenner
Tilburg University & FWO Flanders / KU Leuven

Background: Usage-based approaches to language emphasize how language primarily consists of constructions which take up varying positions on the lexicon-syntax continuum (Langacker 1987, Goldberg 1995). In contact situations, constructions of various shapes and different levels of schematicity are exchanged between the languages in contact (Heine/Kuteva 2005, Dođruöz & Backus 2009, Zenner et al. 2010). By comparing Dutch-English (*weak*) and Dutch-Turkish (*intense*) contact situations through spoken corpus analysis, we will investigate how the intensity of the contact situation influences the constraints on the fixedness of the borrowed forms and their positions on the lexicon-syntax continuum.

Data and Analyses: Concerning the type of English constructions found in Dutch, our analyses rely on the manual transcriptions of three seasons of the Dutch reality TV show “Expeditie Robinson”. The corpus consists of ten thousand utterances for 52 speakers. The data contain almost 900 English insertions, 300 of which consist of more than one word. These 300 longer stretches are analyzed according to their degree of conventionality and fixedness, for which we rely on a variety of diagnostic tests (frequency information, lexicographical treatment, speaker judgment etc.). The analyses reveal that these longer stretches of English are typically highly conventional fixed units: they should rather be considered as instances of borrowed phraseology than as codeswitches.

Turkish spoken in the Netherlands (NL-Turkish) sounds unconventional in comparison to Turkish spoken in Turkey (TR-Turkish). In addition to the codeswitches between Turkish and Dutch, NL-Turkish also hosts Dutch-like constructions of various sizes and shapes. This study compares the NL-Turkish and TR-Turkish spoken corpora in terms of the frequency, fixedness and conventionality of the [N *yapmak/etmek*] “N do/make” constructions. The analyses indicate on-going changes in NL-Turkish due to literal translations of fixed and partially schematic [N *yapmak/etmek*] constructions from Dutch.

Contribution to the Field: While interpreting the differences between the two cases, we link the analyses to the Cognitive Sociolinguistics paradigm and emphasize the important link between the attested variation and its meaning. (Kristiansen/Dirven 2008; Geeraerts et al. 2010). To this end, our interpretation mainly relies on the socio-cultural background of the two contact situations. Where contact with English in Belgium and The Netherlands is remote, indirect and asymmetrical, Dutch-Turkish contact is intense, direct and asymmetrical. Drawing on insights from Construction Grammar and Cognitive Sociolinguistics, our study adds to existing borrowability research, which has so far largely focused on the direct borrowing of single word units and on calquing of grammatical patterns rather than on issues such as fixedness and conventionality. Furthermore, we contribute to the field of Cognitive Linguistics by analyzing linguistic variation through *borrowed* (unconventional) constructions with various levels of fixedness, as such fine-tuning the boundaries of linguistic creativity traditionally noted for conventional constructions in *non-contact varieties*. Finally, by comparing the borrowings across different contact situations with different intensity, we offer a new and fruitful expansion to the domain of Cognitive (Socio)linguistics to what we propose to call “Cognitive Contact Linguistics”.