New worlds for old words

The impact of cultured borrowing on the languages of Western Europe

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Mundos nuevos para viejas palabras

El impacto de los cultismos en los idiomas de Europa occidental

Edited by

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Queen Mary University of London

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Bridging Languages and Scholarship

Series in Language and Linguistics

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Diseño de cubierta de Vernon Press usando elementos diseñados por aopsan / Freepik y Layerace / Freepik.

The book is consistently scholarly and informative, often original, and at times entertaining. Gloria Clavería Nadal hits the nail on the head as to why the topic is of interest: "Old words have actually become the most natural way for modern languages to name these new worlds created on a daily basis" (p.29), most obviously, but not only, in non-linguistic fields such as science and medicine. Thus this book will make clear why 'cultured borrowings' should not be dismissed as irrelevant, as they have tended to be in the past.

Roger Wright
Emeritus Professor of Spanish
University of Liverpool

The issue—what traditionally used to be called "learnèd borrowing"—is an important one also in the light of more recent theoretical contributions that consider language dynamics not just as a homogeneous process of evolution but rather as a differentiated composite history of discursive traditions between "immediacy" and "distance" ... The contact of modern European languages (mainly Spanish, but also other European languages) with classical languages via cultural contact and translation is treated in this volume from a wide range of perspectives: from medieval to contemporary borrowings, from philological, psycholinguistic to didactic approaches and including not only purely lexical, but also morphological aspects. The book is particularly of interest for advanced students and scholars in Romance linguistics.

Dr. Johannes Kabatek
University of Zurich

What is transcendent and makes the present studies a source for further research, is that, in many cases, by process of metaphorization, the lexical piece taken from the classical language becomes a term of the common language, and its oral version. This is the first strength of this publication. The second is that much of the research presented is part of ongoing research, developed not individually, but by team members of recognized quality. The third strength is the origin of the data handled ... Explanations are not ventured but are given with the support of reliable sources. There is a fourth

strength, and it is the volume and quality of the bibliographies that each author has provided at the end of their chapter. For the specialized reader, there is a fifth strength: almost all the authors mention that theirs is an open investigation, which will be outlined in future works.

Dr. Emma Martinell
Professor Emeritus
University of Barcelona, Spain

The central idea of the contributed volume ... is that the concept of "learnèd borrowing" ... should be seen as a palpable linguistic consequence of one of the best-documented cultural contacts ever in the history of Western Europe. This idea, as a common thread, (re-)appears cunningly through the book, showing that learned borrowing-regardless of the source and target languages-has been very productive either in earlier or in the present states of the studied languages of Western Europe. Thus, each of the 13 chapters addresses the linguistic as well as the extralinguistic causes and mechanisms contributing to its output, seen from different linguistic perspectives.

Dr. Andrzej Zieliński
Instytut Filologii Romańskiej
Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Krakow, Poland

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Abbreviations

a.C.	antes de Cristo
ár.clás.	árabe clásico
ár.hisp.	árabe hispánico
ca.	*circa* (about)
cast.	castellano (Castilian)
Cat.	Catalan
CE	Christian Era
cf.	compare
d.	died
d.C.	después de Cristo
e.g.	*exempli gratia* (for example)
Eng.	English
esp. ant.	español antiguo
esp.	español
fem.	feminine
ff.	following
fn.	footnote
Fr.	French
Gasc.	Gascon
Gk./gr.	Greek/griego
i.e./*i. e.*	*id est* (that is/es decir)
ibid.	*ibidem* (in the same place)
ing.	inglés
It.	Italian
Lat./lat.	Latin/latín
leon.	leonés (Leonese)
masc.	masculine
MFr.	Modern French
MSp.	Modern Spanish

n.d.	no date
Occ.	Occitan
OEngad.	Old Engadine
OFr.	Old French
OOcc.	Old Occitan
OSp.	Old Spanish
p./pág.	page/página
p.ej.	por ejemplo
pl.	plural
Port.	Portuguese
Rom.	Romanian
s.v.	*sub voce*
Sard.	Sardinian
sg.	singular
Sp.	Spanish
var.	variant
vol.	volume

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Introduction

The subject of this book is the study of what in English is usually termed "learnèd" borrowing, that is, direct borrowing by the languages of Western Europe from the most widely used languages of European antiquity, Latin and Greek (the latter very often via Latin). This process, which we will refer to overall as "cultured borrowing" (though individual authors may use different terminology: see the Index of Topics), may be considered the single most important cultural contact observable in the history of Western Europe, and, moreover, so far from being a matter of purely historical interest, is ongoing. The Romance languages have a particular characteristic in this respect since they have a history of continuous descent from Latin, with the result that the same Latin word may have both inherited and cultured developments: for example, French *froid* 'cold' (popular) and *frigide* (learnèd), which both derive from Latin *frigidus*. Such words of cultured origin are widely shared, and a notable consequence of their wide adoption is that they have brought about some convergence among the Romance languages and indeed with other Western European languages too, especially English: thus to French *frigide* there correspond Spanish and Portuguese *frígido* and Italian *frigido*, as well as English *frigid*. Although originally these words can be seen to have been introduced by a cultured élite in the process of elaboration of vernaculars which needed more specialised vocabulary in order to achieve greater discrimination of meaning, either to label new concepts or for creative literary effect, many have now migrated into everyday usage. This can be illustrated by the borrowing from Greek via Latin of the word *problem*, which as Spanish *problema* is today the 145th commonest word in the language (Davies and Davies 2017).

This has been the theme of one of the six research strands of a major UK languages research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council called *Language Acts and Worldmaking*, directed overall by Professor Catherine Boyle at King's College London. The research questions initially posed by this strand (called *Loaded Meanings*) were deliberately wide ranging and to a large extent original. How did cultured borrowings become embedded in their host language, both socially and linguistically, and how can we detect and quantify their dissemination through society? To what extent do they

replace existing words, or, in the event that they represent an "elaboration" of the host language and a gain in semantic discrimination, how were the concepts they denote previously expressed, if at all? How do their meanings change after their first embedding, and how do they become associated with particular linguistic, social and cultural contexts? How do present-day language users and planners exploit cultured sources in creating neologisms or in resurrecting words which have become obsolete?

The project also raises some much wider issues.

The history of the Romance languages has often been construed as the history of the development of spoken Latin, on which cultured influence is seen as being a contamination, an interference in the "natural" processes of linguistic change. For this reason, the ideal subject in the dialect surveys on which the great linguistic atlases were based was an illiterate sexagenarian who had never moved far from his or her place of birth. For the same reason, the initial interest in cultured borrowings was that they provided a rationale for saving the Neogrammarian hypothesis about the regularity of sound change, since cultured borrowings could be discounted as being patently exceptional; the focus was on the date of their first attestation, which is recorded in etymological dictionaries as the occasion on which they were "added" to the language. However, the Romance languages which are usually the prime object of study, and those for which the largest corpus of textual material exists, are the elaborated and now standardised official languages we know as French, Spanish, Portuguese, etc. None has escaped the transforming influence of Latin as they have become vehicles of lawmaking, culture and technical writing, and such elaboration is a characteristic feature of all such *Ausbau* languages, in Kloss's (1967) useful terminology. As such, the influence of Latin is an equally "natural" process in the linguistic evolution of the languages of Western Europe, and cannot be set aside, as neither can the wide range of written registers and styles which is observable in all these languages.

There is also a question about what has been referred to as the "embedding problem" (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968) of how innovating features are diffused and become established in their host language. It has been evident from our researches that the date of the first attestation of a cultured borrowing is by no means evidence of its wide adoption within the language, which may follow only centuries later (if indeed it follows at all). In fact, philological scrutiny of early examples often reveals that a word was still essentially foreign, or being used in a technical way (and that in modern orthographic

practice would be likely to have been written in italics or quotation marks). It is for this reason that we have started at the end of the story, as it were (though ongoing tendencies lead us to suppose that it is in fact very far from the end), and focused on the history of cultured borrowings which can now be demonstrated through their frequency in the modern language to have become thoroughly integrated.

Most elusively, there is the question of what is often referred to today as "transnational" influence. Although etymological dictionaries habitually say that cultured borrowings originate in Latin (or Greek, though as already observed, many Hellenisms passed into both Classical Latin and Medieval Latin and were probably borrowed from there, especially prior to the Humanist period when Greek was less well known by the educated), the extent of the shared cultured vocabulary within the Romance languages and English, and even further afield by other Germanic languages, seems to suggest that the borrowing, or encouragement of borrowing, was due to contact among the scholarly communities of their speakers. The actual mechanics of the process, are, however, difficult to trace: for two examples (Eng. *problem* / Fr. *problème* / Sp. and It. *problema*; Eng., Fr. and Sp. *social* / It. *sociale*), see Pountain, Wislocka Breit, Díaz-Bravo and García Ortiz (in press).

Lastly, there is a question which relates to the fundamental concept of the *Language Acts and Worldmaking* project. Since many cultured borrowings have become successfully embedded in their host languages, they appear to label quite basic notions (the words for "easy" and "difficult", Fr. *facile* / Sp. *fácil* / It. *facile* and Fr. *difficile* / Sp.*difícil* / It. *difficile* are obvious examples), while others, in labelling new concepts, such as *apendicitis*, effectively "make worlds". The question therefore arises as to how such concepts were previously expressed, particularly the basic notions which we may assume were always of importance, even if more technical words discriminate genuinely new ideas, conditions and artefacts. This question has been most extensively studied by Dworkin, who explores the theme further in this volume.

In September 2019 an International Colloquium was held in London inviting contributions on these themes, together with invited presentations from world-renowned experts. This book collects together a selection of these papers and assesses their significance for our understanding of the field and its future development. All make an original contribution to knowledge in terms of both

the new interpretation of data and the development of new methodological approaches.

Although *Language Acts and Worldmaking* was originally designed with a predominantly Hispanic emphasis, it quickly embraced interest in other languages, as well as in wider concern with the issues its research was raising. This expansion of focus is reflected in this collection of papers: while most are connected with the particular research questions in which members of the home research team were engaged, more general linguistic questions such as the nature and impact of linguistic borrowing, historical sociolinguistics and the history of the expression of basic concepts are also addressed, as is the relevance of cultured borrowings to the teaching of Latin.

It is hoped that this volume will encourage interest in the field of cultured borrowings and open up new directions for further research along these lines.

Synopsis

The majority of Chapters address the question of the processes by which cultured borrowings became established in their host languages.

Gloria Clavería Nadal highlights the ongoing process of cultured borrowing in Spanish from the 18th to the early 21st centuries. She examines the many dictionaries published during this period, assessing the evidence they offer for the introduction of Latinisms and for the impact they made upon the language, especially with regard to the increase of complex consonantal groups and the productivity of compound formations. The problems posed by such borrowings for the spelling system of Spanish are also analysed.

Some particular agents of change are then considered.

Translation from Latin into Spanish has long been considered a vehicle for the introduction of cultured borrowings, as translators strive to find Spanish translation equivalents for Latin words in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance and may simply adapt these words into their vernacular. **Santiago Del Rey Quesada** studies the phenomenon of paratactic lexical groups in which one term appears to explain the other, so that a new word is effectively glossed by an old one, in translations from Latin into French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. He reaches the important conclusion that the influence of Latin as a direct result of translation is not as great as might be intuitively suspected.

The use of cultured borrowings from Latin and Greek is also apparent in technical discourse, where such words are adopted to name essentially new concepts or distinctions which cannot be so clearly discriminated in existing vernacular words. Attention is called to the role of medical science as a vehicle of borrowing by **Isabel García Ortiz** in a single-word case study of Spanish *síntoma*: she shows that, in addition to the process of borrowing for technical purposes, the more recent diffusion of the word has been brought about by a process of metaphorisation.

The role of the press is examined in two Chapters. **Susana Guerrero Salazar** looks at the exploitation of Latin words and expressions in the headlines of the Spanish sporting press. She shows that while a small number of these have found their way into approved usage, many are to be regarded as quotations from Latin; their use has an intensifying effect and is associated with humour or with the expression of approval or criticism. **Carmen Varo Varo** examines the use of cultured elements in neologistic compounds used by the Spanish press, demonstrating that this is a phenomenon which has recently grown in productivity. She then reports on a psycholinguistic experiment in which speakers were asked to evaluate certain words of this type from the point of view of their newness and complexity.

María del Carmen Rodríguez Caballero reports on how as a teacher of Latin she has been able to call attention to the pervasive presence of Latin words and expressions in everyday use in modern Spanish, especially in the promotion of the Roman origins of her city of Zamora. Finally, **Bozena Wislocka Breit** traces the use of the cultured adjectives Eng. *classical* and *modern* / Sp. *clásico* and *moderno* in a comparative study of their characterisations of languages in English and Spanish. She suggests that they have come to denote a dichotomy between the teaching and learning of Latin and Greek as against living foreign languages, although in the course of time they have had a number of competitors, the majority equally cultured borrowings.

Subsequent Chapters look at the different kinds of impact made by cultured borrowings on modern host languages.

The theme of competition between borrowings and existing words is taken up by **Steven N. Dworkin**, who looks at cases of competition between Latinisms and inherited words in late medieval and early modern Spanish. While the majority of cultured borrowings were, as suggested in earlier Chapters, part of the process of the elaboration of the vernacular and tended to expand its

vocabulary, there is a smaller number of cultured borrowings which intriguingly substituted common inherited words which denoted basic concepts, or even substituted previous borrowed forms. **Inmaculada González Sopeña** considers in a similar way the presence of two borrowings from Arabic (*almofía* and *tarquín*) which have currency in 16th and 17th-century Granada, although they have in the long run not prospered. One of these, *almofía*, shows an interesting competition with another word of Arabic origin, *jofaina*.

The next two Chapters are concerned with the possible wider structural impact of cultured lexical borrowing. **Christopher J. Pountain** shows that the extensive cultured borrowing of Latin verbs into the Spanish *-ir* conjugation reinforces what had become a small and unproductive conjugation-type and even added to its morphological complexity with a variation that is still ongoing in the modern language. **Alessandro Carlucci** examines the role of English in the increasing favouring in Italian of compound noun phrases in which the modified element follows the modifier (e.g. *scuolabus*, parallel to Eng. *school bus*). He points out that this order is present in many cultured borrowings such as *termometro* 'thermometer', and establishes a typology of such compounds.

Rocío Díaz Bravo and Gael Vaamonde analyse the presence of cultured borrowings in the speech of characters in the sixteenth-century Spanish novel *La lozana andaluza*, broadly demonstrating the association of such words with educated characters. Their work shows the importance of such literary texts as a source of evidence for historical sociolinguistics, but also the need for philological care in its evaluation. The final Chapter, by **Ingmar Söhrman**, is a very wide-ranging study of words belonging to the semantic field of 'magic' in European languages. It highlights the intriguing question of transnational contact and influence in the process of borrowing.

Christopher J. Pountain and Bozena Wislocka Breit

December 2020

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