

## **On Using Loan Words (National Geographic Magazine as an Example)**

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### **Abstract**

The scientific knowledge is broadening in our contemporary world and the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an unprecedented growth in this domain, important discoveries and theories achieved widespread publicity, and introduced new styles of expression to an ever-curious public.

By the end of the century, there was a recognizable variety of scientific English, shaped by the observations of grammarians, the expectations of the burgeoning scientific societies and the style guides of the new academic journals. National Geographic Magazine which was first published in 1888 by the National Geographic Society is an illustration of this interest in scientific knowledge. The magazine contains articles about geography, popular science, chemical pollution, global warming history, culture, and photography. It is now published in thirty-two different language editions around the world.

It is true that scientific discourse involves facts and information and subject matter takes priority over the style of the language, but even formal scientific language becomes inventive from time to time. The language of the National Geographic Magazine has developed a special style, which often aims at conveying information in a thrilling and attractive way (supplemented with maps and magnificent photos) to capture the attention of the reader and to influence the opinion of certain sections of the public considering the fact that more than fifty million people receive the magazine every month.

This study examines the use of loan words as a stylistic device in the articles of National Geographic (the English edition) to produce a local environment. The two expressions (loan words) and (borrowed words) are used interchangeably throughout the study since they both refer to the process where both form and meaning are borrowed or assimilated with

some adaptation to the phonological system of the new language. Before presenting the examples that show the use of loan words and in order to clarify that borrowing is an everlasting process and a means whereby all languages can copy and add new lexical items to their repository, the researcher finds it important to focus on the meaning of loan words as a process, the major reasons behind it and the classes of loan words in three sections.

## **1-Loan Words:**

### **1-1 What are loan words?**

Loan or borrowed words are words adopted by the speakers of one language from the abstract noun (borrowing) refers to the process of speakers adopting words and -sometimes- phrases from a source language into their native language. Loan words simply come to be used by a speech community that speaks a different language from the one they originated in.

Borrowing is a well-known universal process and an important manifestation of language contact. When two or more different speech communities come in contact, under whatsoever conditions; it is a natural consequence that lexical borrowing takes place "most languages are borrowers, so the lexicon can be divided into native and nonnative words, often called loan words" (Fromkin and Rodman, 1988: 309).

Borrowing of words can go in both directions between the two languages in contact, but often there is asymmetry, such that more words go from one side to the other. In this case the source language community has some advantage of power, prestige and or wealth that makes the objects and ideas it brings desirable and useful to the borrowing language community. For example, the Germanic tribes in the first few centuries A.D. adopted numerous loan words from Latin as they adopted new products via trade with the Romans. Few Germanic words, on the other hand, passed into Latin (cited in Kemmer, 2007).

A language may borrow a word directly or indirectly, a direct borrowing means that the borrowed item is a native word in the language from which it is borrowed; e.g. (feast) was borrowed directly from French and can be traced back to Latin (festa). The word (algebra) -for example- was borrowed from Spanish which in turn had borrowed it from Arabic. Thus

(algebra) was indirectly borrowed from Arabic with Spanish as intermediary (Fromkin and Rodman, 1988: 310; Pyles, 1971: 105).

And since interlingual contacts lead to large-scale borrowing and bilingual interference; (Mackey and Ornestin, 1979: 278-279) classified word borrowing in terms of the direction of the process into four cases: when two equally dominant or non-dominant cultures interact with each other, mutual borrowing takes place as when the two superpowers of the world (America and Russia) come into contact. While when one dominant culture comes into contact with a subordinate culture, the direction of word borrowing is from the dominant to the subordinate.

American word borrowing by Japanese is an example of this case. The third case of borrowing occurs between a subordinate culture and a dominant within the same country, which represents mostly the dominant culture. This is extremely applicable to American culture and the culture of immigrants to America. The culture immigrants (as a subordinate one) may also, in its turn, affect the dominant culture. For example, the Mexican-Spanish word (taco) which is used in Am E, becomes not only a local word but also a national and international one (McArthur, 1998: 5). The last case is somehow related to the previous one since it occurs between a main culture and subcultures whose speakers borrow from the main culture, but among the subcultures themselves there is either no word borrowing or mutual borrowing.

### **1-2 Reasons behind Borrowing:**

Borrowing is the result of cultural diffusion and bilingual interacts. The language system itself extends by the borrowing of lexemes from other languages. It is important to realize that linguistic innovation is one of the reasons to which lexical borrowing can be assigned and since "there are certain things that cannot be said at all in particular languages, simply because the vocabulary with which to say them does not exist" (Lyons, 1981:310); new words should be invented to designate the things and ideas that are learned by one culture from another, otherwise the words are borrowed from their original culture to fill a gap existed in certain languages. Thus, English names for creatures not natives to Great Britain are almost always loanwords, and most of the technical vocabulary referring to classical music is borrowed from Italian, e.g. (opera, piano,

soprano, balcony, studio, violin, stanza, tempo) (cited in Wikipedia, 2008).

A lot of languages have food vocabulary borrowed from French like English's mutton, pork, soufflé and even restaurant. This suggests that the French have been very influential in the realm of cuisine from many years. Moreover, many terms relating to Western technology and culture have become part of the vocabulary of the world's languages. In the last few decades, English has been primarily a donor language. English is the world's premier language for science, technology, business, and for popular culture, English words like: computer, software, floppy, CD, walkman, heavy metal, rock and jazz have accordingly flooded into: French, Spanish, German, Italian and even Japanese. And English speakers in turn have borrowed many words from other languages, the vocabularies of modern Japanese and English -for example- share a significant number of common words like: sushi, hibachi, judo, sumo, karaoke (Trask, 1999: 97; Hudson, 2000: 247; Akmajian and Demers, 1997: 304).

Sometimes, even when there are available words to express exotic concepts or ideas, foreign words are to be preferred because of the local colour they produce; if loan words are used sparingly and effectively they can create local environment by transferring the reader into the atmosphere to which they normally belong. Moreover, writers tend, sometimes to use loan words as stylistic device because of their evocative effects, emotive associations and connotations that cannot be found in their equivalents which belong to the native languages of the writers. For example, a writer may use an English word because of its exotic quality, without any specific reference to things. English, the term (steamer) borrowed into French in 1829 found its way into poetry where it helps to evoke the (exotique nature) towards which the ship is setting sail:

Je partirai! Steamer balançant ta mature,

L'ève l'ancre vers une exotique nature

(Ullmann, 1964: 111-113; Halverson and Cooley, 1965: 158-161)

Sometimes, borrowed words are used because they are simply more convenient, recently the Italian government has expressed its displeasure over the borrowing of English words in Italian. English words are often used where they are more convenient than a longer Italian

expression, as in "computer" for (elaboratore elettronico) or "week-end" for "finesettimana" (cited in Wikipedia, 2008).

The process of lexical borrowing can also be assigned to social reasons (Ullmann, 1964: 113) states that in certain social circles, foreign words are often used because of their snob and prestigious values, the speakers of the borrowing language try to borrow and use foreign words to show their familiarity with that foreign language. The ancient Romans often used this technique for deriving words from the then more prestigious Greek (Trask, 1999: 197).

Social reasons include the situation mentioned by (Mackey and Ornestin, 1979: 284) who state that visitors and immigrants to foreign countries tend to use borrowed words in their native language to show their progress in acculturation.

### **1-3 Classes of Borrowed Words:**

Certain classes of words are more commonly borrowed than others, usually words for exotic concepts or ideas "words that are borrowed are mostly so-called content words like names and adjectives. So-called function words like prepositions and conjunctions are rarely borrowed" (Jespersen, 1922: 212).

When a word is borrowed from one language by another, it undergoes the phonological and morphological rules of the borrowing language and not those of the original language, "words are often borrowed from the foreign language but are given the morphological and phonological characteristics of the indigenous language" (Wallwork, 1980: 171). Generally, the longer a borrowed word has been in the language, and the more frequently it is used, the more it resembles the native words of the language. For example, English speakers adopted the word (garage) from French, at first with pronunciation nearer to the French pronunciation than is now usually found (cited in Kemmer, 2007). Changing the pronunciation of borrowed words so they conform to the pronunciation rules of the borrowing language is a process called (nativization), by which borrowed word loses pronunciation features of the source language

and assimilates to the pronunciation patterns of the borrowing language. This is evident in the Japanese baseball vocabulary "sutoraiku" (strike) and English in India -for example- is said to have undergone nativization because changes have occurred in aspects of its phonology, vocabulary, grammar, etc., so that it is now recognized as a distinct variety of English-Indian English (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 351; Hudson, 2000: 247).

On the other hand, (Mackey and Ornisten, 1979: 284) state that borrowed words introduced by skilled workmen and used in such practical areas as cooking and dressing are pronounced in close approximation to their original pronunciation as compared to those introduced by intellectuals.

#### 2-The Examples of Loan Words in National Geographic Magazine:

The writers of the National Geographic Magazine tackle various subjects and in order to transfer the readers into the environment of the town they are talking about, the phenomenon they are discussing, or the cultural or historical events they are covering, the writers tend to harness borrowed words that belong to the native culture discussed in the article in a careful way so as not to distract the attention of the readers and to enrich the subject by creating a local atmosphere. This is proved by the fact that the borrowed words are attached to their equivalents in English. The examples are taken from randomly chosen issues of the magazine. The title of the article will be given first followed by the name of the writer and the main subject of the article. The examples of the borrowed words are given in complete sentences and are underlined.

**Article's title: Helsinki**

**Written by: Priit Vesilind**

Main subject: Finland, its capital, traditions and population under microscope

Example: (Finnish loan words)

- 1- There are folk dances in the amphitheater, gypsy fortune tellers, and the sweet smell of birch fires and roasting makkara-sausage.
- 2- Among Helsinki's young whose astonishingly large following of teenagers, called the diinarit, emulate what they think was the American tough guy of the 1950s.

**Article's title: The Sherpas****Written by: T.R. Reid**

Main subject: the story of the people of Nepal's Khumbu region

Examples: (loan words are taken from the official language of the region which is called Khashura Bhasha)

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**Article's title: Molokai-forgotten Hawaii****Written by: Ethel Starbird**

Main subject: the people of Molokai Island (which is anchored about midway in the major Hawaiian chain) and their way of living

Examples: (Hawaiian loan words)

- 1- They freely crossed to reach common hunting and fishing grounds, now bear signs reading Kapu. It's the Hawaiian word for "keep out".
- 2- Someone give you pilikia- trouble- turn the cheek.
- 3- On the north side the volcanic landscape ends in fortress- like pali-cliffs- that plummet some 3,000 feet into an unruly surf.
- 4- House foundation, rock walls and heiau- temples- litter the landscape in places now barely accessible.

**Article's title: Tango-Soul of a Nation****Written by: Alma Guillermoprieto**

Main subject: What is tango? A sensual, moving dance, a way to mourn? or to escape.

Examples: (Spanish loan words)

- 1- Today it remains at the center of the emotional life of portenos- the inhabitants of the port city of Buenos Aires- because the music's heart broken, lyricism is part of this abused city.
- 2- The timeless melodies propped bodies into the floor at a Buenos Aires milogna (tango session), where lovers and friends pivot and glide away the afternoon.

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**Article's title: Japan's Way of the Warrior****Written by: Tom O'Neill**

Main subject: the story of the Samurai, the elite warrior class who ruled Japan for nearly 700 years.

Examples: (Japanese loan words)

- 1-Like the knights, Samurai (the word means "one who serves") formed a military elite composed of clan leaders or warlords and loyal soldiers.
- 2-Some of us like to use another word for warrior, bushi, which has a higher, more chivalrous meaning.
- 3-To avoid the dishonor of computer, defeated Samurai began practicing seppuku-suicide by disembowelment.
- 4-The plays deal with revenge, honor and sacrifice, key elements of a code of ethics known as Bushido, or way of the warrior.
- 5-The Samurai also wore a shorter blade, the wakizaski, more of an indoor weapon.
- 6- A tenth generation katanahaji, or maker of the long sword.
- 7-Many of these ashigaru, or light feet, carried firearms.
- 8-Millions of Japanese schoolgirls still practice classic warrior skills of sword fighting hand unarmed combat (jijitsu).

**Article's title: Rare Look at North Korea****Written by: Edward Kim**

Main subject: the story of North Korea as a country and its people during the 1970s

Examples: (Korean loan words)

- 1-She is attractive and is wearing a blue chima, -the traditional high-wasted flowing shirt, with matching short jacket, a chogari.
- 2- We have a Pyongyang specialty, nang myun: buckwheat noodles in a chilled beef soup, garnished with shield boiled egg.
- 3-Cutting oil and other imports to a bare minimum keeps North Korea from being dependent on any other country. Juche- self reliance- is an official slogan.



**Article's title: The Two Samoas still Coming of Age****Written by: Robert Booth**

Main subject: the islands of Samoa; their positions traditions and heritage

Examples: (Samoan loan words)

- 1- Each village is composed of one or more aiga, or extended families, some numbering hundreds of members. Each aiga chooses its matai- or chief- who oversees its distribution. Matai belong to the village bono, or council, which sets policy.
- 2- Dressed in their waist-to- knee wraparound shirts called lavalava, they look about as effeminate as the Las Angeles Raiders.

**Article's title: Arabia's Frankincense Trail****Written by: Thomas Abercrombie**

Main subject: the region of South Yemen's desert and the frankincense trade of the Hadramis

Examples: (Arabic loan words)

- 1- We exchanged greetings in Arabic.. they spoke Jebali, a mountain language with unfamiliar lisps and nasals- relic of ancient South Arabian dialects- but turned back to me and said in Arabic "Ala al-shemal" "keep left".
- 2- Ali's blindfolded nagah, or she camel, plodded in endless 16-foot circles.
- 3- Yathrib became known as Madinat al Nabi- city of the Prophet- and finally, simply Al Madinah, "The City".
- 4- Sweet giant drops of rain, then a deluge -khayr Allah- Hamad called it: "God's bounty"- the first good soaker in nearly three years.

**Article's title: The Twilight of Apartheid****Written by: Charles Cobb**

Main subject: life in black South Africa

Examples: (South African loan words)

- 1- Back room businesses called spazas are everywhere and sell everything: toiletries, meats and even medicine.
- 2- Toyi-toyiing, the high-stepping dance patterned on guerrilla marches, kept a steady beat.

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**Article's title: Mexico's Pilgrim Cowboys****Written by: Alexander Fuller**

Main subject: the pilgrimage of hundreds of Mexican riders in central Mexico which has been happening for more than half a century

Examples: (Mexican loan words)

- 1- In the state of Guanajuato, thousands of feet up cobbled switchbacks from the high plateau, which is called el bajio, the low land.
- 2- But seldom is there such a massive cabalgata- a horseback gathering of faith.

**Article's title: The King Maker****Written by: Alexander Fuller**

Main subject: the story of Maya civilization

Examples: (Mayan loan words)

- 1- In the dry season, the heat bakes the swampy bajos, or bottomland, the rivers fall and drought threatens everything.
- 2- It is a land of machetes, and mud, serpents and cats- most notably balam, the jaguar, lord of the jungle.
- 3- Mediating between the heavens and earth were the Maya kings- the kuhul ajaw- or holy lords, who derived their power from the gods.
- 4- In the sixth century, the kan (snake) lords of Calakmul, began their expansion.
- 5- A pyramid called La iglesia (the church) soars into the canopy of the rain forest at Coba.

### **Conclusions**

The results of the analytic study have led to the following conclusions:

- 1- Loan words are used in the National Geographic Magazine because they produce local environment and create native atmosphere.
- 2- Loan words are used sparingly and effectively. The writers of this magazine aim at providing information and opening new horizons to their readers, therefore they don't exaggerate in using loan words and they follow them with their English equivalents or definitions, in addition to the fact that they are written in italics to attract the readers' attention.
- 3- All of the borrowed words have undergone phonological changes so they conform and assimilate to the pronunciation rules of the borrowing language (English) in a process called nativization.
- 4- Examining the texts of the National Geographic Magazine by identifying its vocabulary and stylistic features will help a lot in the field of EAP (English for Academic Purposes); specially in the field of analyzing informative and expository texts.

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