From new form to new entry: introduction to the special theme on loanwords and non-standard orthography

Shan Wang¹ · Chu-Ren Huang²

Published online: 24 May 2020
© Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2020

The lexicon in a language is a dynamic and open system. The ability to incorporate new ideas from other cultures by introducing new words is an important source of vitality of a language and culture. In the long river of history, through trade exchanges, cultural exchanges, immigration, wars and other ways, people of various ethnic groups have been continuously communicating with each other. Consequently, languages contact with each other, influence each other, and infiltrate each other (Bloomfield 1933; Cannon 1987; Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009; Thomason and Kaufman 1988; Weinreich 1953). In the era of globalization where science and technology are developing rapidly, information exchange is more convenient leading to more diverse language contact. Among different types of language contact, the most common one is word borrowing. These borrowed words are called loanwords.

Loanwords offer rich rewards as they open a window to language contact and change, lexical innovation, and the cross-fertilization between two or more cultures. Nevertheless, loanwords especially those with non-standard orthography pose a special challenge to lexicography. Three papers appear under this special theme in the journal *Lexicography*: two of them deal with the lexicography of loanwords, while the other one deals with haplology, a unique type of lexical variations and non-standard orthography.

In the paper “New loanwords in the Neologismenwörterbuch: Corpus-based development of lexicographic information for an online dictionary of Contemporary German”, Maike Park examined the following questions: (1) What are the differences between general dictionaries of Modern German and a specialized dictionary of neologisms in dealing with new borrowings? (2) What kind of benefits do modern online lexicography offer for the description and overall presentation of newly borrowed words that might not have been fully assimilated to a receiving

✉ Shan Wang
Shanwang@um.edu.mo

¹ Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Macau, Avenida da Universidade, Taipa, Macau, China

² Faculty of Humanities, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 11 Yuk Choi Rd, Hong Kong, China

language system? (3) Can differences in the lexicalization and later-on acceptance of borrowed words be attributed to different types of borrowing processes and the degree of proximity between writing systems of languages? (4) How can dictionaries use corpus data to describe actual instances of a word's most frequent usage and analyze different options for its standardized adaptation in consideration of features of the giving language, the receiving language, and the potential original donor language?

The author argues that new borrowings will have been used for a period of time before entering a dictionary, during which they become more commonly used and establish lexical and orthographic features consistent with the language system they are borrowed into. In the case of dictionaries of neologisms, the inclusion of newly borrowed words usually occurs in a transitional state of assimilation to the language system. In this state, delayed spelling or phonetic changes cannot be excluded, depending on how close the donor's writing system is to the recipient's language, even though potential standard and non-standard spelling word forms are usually differentiated. After a brief overview of loanwords and their lexical descriptions in *Neologismenwörterbuch (NWB)*, a modern German dictionary of neologisms, this article advocates the benefits of corpus-based analysis and description of new loanwords, especially for their presentation in specialized online dictionaries.

"Lexicography for loanwords and words with special orthography: Loanwords in Modern Standard Chinese" is the second paper on loanwords. In this paper, Christian Schmidt and Chen Jien-shou explore two questions: (1) What counts as a loanword? (2) How should be made explicit the most important processes during borrowing?

Based on the observation that more attention has been paid to loanwords in Modern Mandarin recently, this paper underlines the complexity caused by the rich history of Chinese writing system, by its variant system (e.g., Japanese kanji), and by dictionary content exchanges with neighboring languages. It argues that the dynamic in the continuity, instead of binary state, of development of loanwords can be attributed to various intentional choices and cumulative results involved in the integration of loanwords. It provides a metalanguage for loanword representation, covering a wide range of relations between the source language and the target language. The paper contains rich examples of all major categories of loanwords, loanword modifiers, and annotation classifications.

Finally, the paper "Haplogy and lexical entries: a study based on cross-linguistic data from Sinitic languages" deals with variations on a special phono-lexical rule that has direct consequence on orthography. The authors, Sicong Dong and Sam Yin Wong, investigate two questions: (1) What should be the standards for dictionaries to include haplogy and non-haplogy forms? (2) What are the mechanisms underlying the acceptability of haplogy forms in different Sinitic languages?

Haplogy is the deletion of one of the two identical neighboring syllables. Haplogy in Chinese is intriguing because it applies at the orthographic level of a character and cannot be directly predicted by morpho-phonological rules as in other languages. The unpredictable nature of haplogy means that the information should be included in the dictionary and a set of guidelines on when or which (haplogy vs. non-haplogy) form to include is extremely challenging. The paper proposes a

framework consisting of three parameters of lexicality, denotation, and acceptability for such a task. Based on a comparative study on haplology in nominal compounds in Taiwan Mandarin and Hong Kong Cantonese, they have found that haplology is constrained by different strength rankings of frequency, tone sandhi, and syllabicity, and the rankings are crucial for judging the acceptability of (non-) haplology forms, and thus are also important for the inclusion of such forms in dictionaries.

The shared foci of these papers are the central issues of (1) the need for a set of executable guidelines on whether to include a lexical unit in a dictionary or not; and (2) the central roles empirical data, both corpus-based or behavioral, play in making such decisions. We expect these two lines of research to continue to attract innovative research in lexicography.

References

- Bloomfield, L. 1933. *Language*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Cannon, G. 1987. Dimensions of Chinese borrowings in English. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 20(2), 200–206.
- Haspelmath, M., and U. Tadmor. 2009. In *Loanwords in the world's languages: a comparative handbook*, ed. M. Haspelmath and U. Tadmor. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Thomason, S.G., and T. Kaufman. 1988. *Language contact, creolization, and genetic linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weinreich, U. 1953. *Languages in contact: findings and problems*. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.