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*Towards a MTV-‘Sprachbund’  
How language contact influences prosodic  
morphological patterns*

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death of languages (Claire Bovern)

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# Towards a MTV-‘Sprachbund’

## *How language contact influences prosodic morphological patterns*

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### **1. Aim**

- This paper aims at showing how a prestigious language can influence the structure of recipient languages via long distance language contact.
- Moreover, the examples presented in this poster show how modern languages borrow morphological patterns.
- To demonstrate this two instances of non-concatenative morphology will be discussed: clipping and blending.
- The language that transfers its patterns is the most prestigious language of this period: (American) English

### **2. Clipping**

Traditional English clippings are monosyllabic (Hamans 1996, Kreidler 1979). This preference has been confirmed experimentally (Carter & Glopper 2002)

- (1) temp from temperature  
ad < advertisement  
vet < veterinarian  
Met < Metropolitan

Recently a new pattern emerged<sup>1</sup>, which became especially popular in modern informal language use:

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (2a) <u>pure clipping</u>          | (2b) <u>clipping + –o</u>       |
| psycho from psychopath             | afro < African                  |
| homo < homosexual                  | journo < journalist             |
| nympho <sup>2</sup> < nymphomaniac | commo <sup>3</sup> < commissary |
| (2c) <u>suffixation with –o</u>    |                                 |
| sicko < sick                       |                                 |
| kiddo < kid                        |                                 |
| radicalo < radical                 |                                 |

In (2a) a process of clipping or truncation takes place, that results in disyllabic clipped forms, mostly trochees ending in –o. In (2b) a process of suffixation, + –o, must have applied after truncation, whereas in (2c) only suffixation applied.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian English with its frequent pattern of clippings ending in –o will not be discussed here.

<sup>2</sup> Examples from Antoine (2000).

<sup>3</sup> Examples from Jespersen (1942)

The process discussed here managed to expand to Western and Central European languages as well to Scandinavia. For instance in Dutch, a language that traditionally also had a preference for monosyllabic clippings (Hamans 1997), one finds nowadays recent trochaic examples such as in (4a-c). In (3) traditional examples of Dutch clipping are presented.

- |      |        |      |             |   |
|------|--------|------|-------------|---|
| (3)  | luit   | from | luitenant   | ‘lieutenant’  |
|      | Jap    | <    | Japanner    | ‘Japanese person’   |
|      | mees   | <    | meester     | ‘teacher’   |
| (4a) | aso    | from | asociaal    | ‘antisocial’  |
|      | provo  | <    | provocateur | ‘member of the provo movement’  |
|      | pedo   | <    | pedofiel    | ‘paedophile’  |
| (4b) | alto   | from | alternatief | ‘alternative’   |
|      | lesbo  | <    | lesbisch    | ‘lesbian’   |
|      | Limbo  | <    | Limburger   | ‘someone from the province of Limburg’  |
| (4c) | lullo  | from | lul         | originally ‘penis’ but as <i>lullo</i> ‘dumb person’                                |
|      | gewono | <    | gewoon      | ‘ordinary person’   |
|      | lokalo | <    | lokaal      | originally ‘local’ but as <i>lokalo</i> ‘representative of a local political party’ |

Note that quite a few of the full forms are adjectives, such as *asociaal*, *alternatief*, *lesbisch*, *gewoon* en *lokaal*, whereas the clipped forms presented here are all nouns.

This innovation also spread to other European languages, be it that the change not yet reached stage (c) everywhere (Hamans 2004b):

- |      |         |                 |      |          |   |
|------|---------|-----------------|------|----------|---|
| (5a) | Swedish |                 |      |          |   |
|      | fullo   | ‘drunkard’      | from | fyll/ful | ‘fill’/ ‘full’                            |
|      | slappo  | ‘lazy bump’     | <    | slap     | ‘soft’                                    |
|      | fetto   | ‘fat person’    | <    | fet      | ‘fat/fatty’                               |
| (5b) | German  |                 |      |          |   |
|      | Realo   | ‘realist’       | from | Realist  | ‘realist’                                 |
|      | Normalo | ‘normal person’ | <    | normal   | ‘normal’                                  |
|      | Kloppo  | ‘Jürgen Klopp’  | <    | Klopp    | ‘famous German football player and coach’ |
| (5c) | Polish  |                 |      |          |   |
|      | dyro    | ‘headmaster’    | from | dyrektor | ‘director’                                |

The change in preference, from originally monosyllabic clipped forms to disyllabic, trochaic clippings, implied a change in template preference, which can be expressed in terms of re-ranking of constraints (Hamans 2012, against Lappe 2003 & 2007). Actually, this re-ranking of prosodic morphological constraints most likely must have been borrowed, indirectly, by the recipient languages. Of course first a few relevant forms have been borrowed, from which the native speaker of the recipient language deduced the new clipping rule. Later on they applied the rule to new examples which were not borrowed from the original source language.

### **3. Blending**

Blending is a process with a long history in several languages, but that only became frequent in modern English recently (Cannon 1986: 736/7), Cannon 2000: 956)

Well known examples of blending are:

- |      |             |                             |                     |
|------|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| (6a) | smog        | from smoke + fog            | <i>sm + og</i>      |
|      | brunch      | from breakfast + lunch      | <i>br + unch</i>    |
| (6b) | stagflation | from stagnation + inflation | <i>stag+flation</i> |
|      | Oxbridge    | from Oxford + Cambridge     |                     |

At first sight the process of blend formation seems rather irregular. In (6a) only the onset of the syllables contribute to the final result, whereas in (6b) full syllables or even lexemes remain unaffected.

However, recent research has shown that the final structure of blends is largely predicable (a.o. Bat-El & Cohen 2012). Moreover, the prosodic structure of the second source word is usually highly relevant for the outcome of the blending process. Blends tend to copy the prosodic structure of the head ( Piñeros 2000 & 2002), Trommer & Zimmerman 2012 and Arndt-Lappe & Plag 2012)

In other European languages blending used to be rare, but becomes more and more familiar under the influence of the (American) English language of mass media, internet, public relations, international commerce and other branches of international economy. As Konieczna (2012: 51) says, when discussing Polish blends:

‘(...) the process has been triggered by the internationalization of Slavic languages, understood as, among other things, the adoption of foreign (predominantly English) derivational patterns such as, for example, compounding without interfixation or clipping.’

Lalić-Krstin (2008: 237) claims that in Serbian blending was practically unknown till recently. For Modern Greek Ralli & Xydopoulos (2012) report the same, just as Tomaszewicz (2012)<sup>4</sup>. Brdar-Zabo & Brdar (2008) investigated the frequency of blending in English, German, Croatian and Hungarian. One of their conclusions is that blends are far more frequent in English than in the other three languages, but that the frequency of blends in these other languages is growing, probably under the influence of foreign, which is English, lexemes. Hamans (2010) showed that the increasing frequency of blending in Dutch also is a recent phenomenon.

In all these languages the prosodic structure of the second source words appear to play a dominant role, even if prosodic factors are rarely relevant in word formation processes in these languages or normally have an opposite effect. An example from Dutch will make clear what the difference is between normal compounding and blending.

- |     |                               |   |         |   |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|---------|---|
| (7) | standard compounding in Dutch |   |         |   |
|     | deur                          | + | ópening | déuropening ‘doorway’                                 |
|     | nacht                         | + | vlínder | náchtvlínder lit. night butterfly ‘moth’ ‘night bird’ |
|     | rood                          | + | bórstje | róodborstje ‘robin’                                   |
|     | voor                          | + | trékker | vóortrekker ‘pioneer’                                 |

The first constituents of the examples in (7) are nouns, *deur* ‘door’ and *nacht* ‘night’ or an adjective *rood* ‘red’ or a preposition *voor* ‘for’. The second constituents are all nouns. The

<sup>4</sup> This article is a description of English blends in terms of OT, but the author makes a few remarks about the frequency of the phenomenon in modern Polish in the margin.

resulting compounds are also nouns. The semantic and structural head is the right hand part of the compound, that also determines the gender of the compound. The left hand part is a sort of semantic determiner of the head. Nevertheless stress in compounds is on this part. In the case of blending the situation is just opposite.

(8) blending in Dutch

pop	+	propáganda	popagánda	‘popaganda’
stagnátie	+	inflátie	stagflátie	‘stagflation’
educátie	+	entertáinment	edutáinment	‘edutainment’

The difference between normal stress assignment in Dutch compounds and stress assignment in the case of blending becomes striking when one analyzes the following examples:

(9a) edutáinment	(9b) múzítainment
docutáinment	wíntertainment
psychotáinment <sup>5</sup>	éet-tainment
relitáinment	Límburg-tainment <sup>6</sup>
spiritáinment	Córso-tainment <sup>7</sup>

The examples under (9a) may be borrowed as blends from English directly, but they can also be analyzed as Dutch blends formed from

(9c) educatie	+ entertainment
documentaire	+ entertainment
psychologie	+ entertainment
religie	+ entertainment
spiritueel	+ entertainment

In both explanations the stress pattern is against the rules of Dutch stress assignment, which says that in compounds main stress is on the first part.

In (9b) a more or less normal process of compounding must have taken place. This kind of forms only could come up after the blended type of (9a) has become popular and frequent. The second part ( in 9b) is the truncated noun *tainment*<sup>8</sup> which has been attested as a independent noun in the meantime frequently in English as well as in Dutch. The first part is a full noun, such as *winter*, *éet* ‘eat’, *corso* ‘flower parade’ or *sport* as in *spórttainment*, a name such as *Limburg* or a clipped noun, e.g. *muzi* from *muziek* . Spelling and pronunciation [myzi] show that the source word must be Dutch.

This subsequent process results in an expected stress shift to the first syllable. In (9a) where blending applies, the stress stays on the second constituent and the resulting form follows the model of the second source word, which is completely against the standard grammar of Dutch.

<sup>5</sup> *psychotainment* also appears with main stress on the first syllable and with a Dutch pronunciation [psixo]. In *docutainment*, *relitainment* and *spiritainment* a similar stress shift has already been heard.

<sup>6</sup> A culinary event in the Belgium province of Limburg.

<sup>7</sup> Flower parade in Lichtenvoorde, a small town in the eastern part of the Netherlands.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance: <http://www.yourdictionary.com/tainment> or <http://www.wordsense.eu/-tainment/>, where (-)tainment is described as backformation of *entertainment*.

Here we have seen two developments: blending in American English and subsequent borrowing of blends and blending processes and a second development reinterpretation of these final blends, which resulted in a ‘normal’ process of compounding. Only the borrowing of blends and blending is an argument for the influence of long distance influence of one language upon another.

## **Sprachbund**

The examples shown so far make clear that phenomena of modern (American) English spread to other languages and even become incorporated in the grammars of these languages. Since there is no direct geographical contact between these languages, there must be another means of contact and transport. This is the way of the mass media, of pop culture, internet and of commerce, especially the language of public relations and marketing.

The language of mass media etcetera, in short modern informal American English or MTV-speak, is so influential that it affects the structure of other modern languages. The result may be called a *Sprachbund*, not yet comparable to the Standard Average European Area (Haspelmath 2001, Heine & Kuteva 2006) or the Charlemagne Sprachbund (Van de Auwera 1998: 823-825), since the features this Sprachbund shares are still limited in number.

However, the term Sprachbund seems appropriate, since the languages discussed here are far removed from each other in other respects (Thomason 2001: 115), but now come to share prosodic morphological rules.

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