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Subject: Twentieth-Century Borrowings from German to English



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AUTHOR: Julia Schultz

TITLE: Twentieth-Century Borrowings from German to English

SUBTITLE: Their Semantic Integration and Contextual Usage

SERIES TITLE: Duisburger Arbeiten zur Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft

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SUMMARY

"Twentieth Century Borrowings from German to English" is a new book of Julia Schultz, recently published by Peter Lang in the series Duisburg Papers on Research in Language and Culture.

After a list of abbreviations and symbols, the work is organized into three chapters of different lengths and an appendix with the list of German borrowings appearing in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and in the EFL dictionaries (English as a Foreign Language dictionaries). In these chapters Schultz wants to investigate the deep influence of German language on the English vocabulary in the 20th century and to examine which areas of English lexical life were enriched by German. Using the Oxford English Dictionary and other dictionaries and corpora available online or in electronic form, Schulz outlines the semantic development and the contextual usage of the German borrowings in the present day English of the last century.

Chapter One, the introduction, is divided into two main parts. The first one focuses on the several previous studies about German influence on English in the 20th century and shows how they were not exhaustive: many of them concentrated actually on describing lexical borrowings only in “core areas” of English; other works instead were only informative and provided essential insights into the influence of German on English. Some studies focused on the phonological and orthographical assimilation of German borrowings in American English; other papers wanted to describe borrowings using as source of investigation only in magazines and newspapers. Because of this situation, it is evident how a more up to date, comprehensive and adequate investigation and treatment of the 20th century German borrowings to the English language is needed.

The second part of Chapter One is devoted to remark the aims of Schultz’ investigation: researching the semantic development of the German borrowings into English and “provid[ing] an overview of the overall chronological distribution of German borrowings [...] and] also a detailed analysis of the temporal dimension of the borrowing process in each subject area” (p. 24). In section 2.3 the author describes the methodology and the several lexical sources she needed, like Duden Online or digitalized corpora like LexisNexis. The last section of this first Chapter contains an explanation of the terminology employed in Schultz’ study. This part is divided into five subsections: 1) a look at the definition of ‘word’, ‘lexical item’, ‘term’ and ‘meaning’; 2) an illustration of the different forms of semantic change as in Ullmann (1967) (broadening, narrowing, metonymy, metaphor, amelioration, pejoration, providing an example for each type of change); 3) types of stylistic functions. Having as frame of reference the studies by Galinsky (1964, 1975) and Pfitzner (1978), the author gives much importance to the pragmatic contextual usage of words and discusses the stylistic dimension of borrowings as pointed out by the linguistic evidence. As a matter of fact, a borrowing may be used for creating local color, for the sake of precision, to heighten the vividness of speech, to permit the writer or the speaker to create a particular tone in several relevant contexts or for a normal variation of style (as an alternative expression to avoid repetitions). 4) Schultz discusses also the different categories of lexical borrowing, using the classification of Carstensen (1968), which reports the main basic ones: ‘direct loan’, ‘foreign word’ / ‘loanword’ / ‘exoticism’, ‘adaptation’, ‘loan translation’, ‘loan rendition’, ‘loan creation’, ‘semantic loan’, ‘hybrid’, ‘pseudo-loan’, ‘double and multiple loans’, ‘back borrowing’. Finally, in 5) the author explains the various grammatical terms she used in her study, like ‘phrase’ and ‘premodification’.

Chapter Two, the core of the study, is devoted to the analysis of the German borrowings that were adopted into English in the last century (1958 lexical items). The total number of words is grouped in nine macro-categories according to their meaning, categories that are labeled by Schultz “areas and spheres of life” (p. 47): ‘Culture and History’ (28 terms), ‘Leisure and Pleasure’ (31 terms), ‘Technology’ (54 terms), ‘Gastronomy’ (67 terms), ‘Fine Arts and Crafts’ (76 borrowings), ‘People and Everyday Life’ (92 words and meanings), ‘Mathematics and the Humanities’ (127 borrowings), ‘Civilization and Politics’ (162 terms), ‘Natural Sciences’ (1307 borrowings). The tenth group is called ‘Miscellaneous’, because it contains fourteen lexical items, which cannot be listed clearly in a particular sphere of human life. The borrowings that have been assigned to every category are German words or words from different varieties of German, but also terms with a mixed etymology (from German and from another language).

Every category presents various subcategories. ‘Culture and History’, which comprises 28 words, is divided for example into four subareas: ‘culturology and cultural history’, ‘Africa’, ‘archeology’ and ‘anthropology’. For every borrowing the author specifies the lexical class (e.g. Gastronomy, cookery, nouns: ‘muesli’) or if it is a noun phrase (e.g. Mathematics and the Humanities, language and linguistics, phrases, noun phrases: ‘Wörter und Sachen’) and also if the borrowing reflects a German proper noun in English (e.g. Natural Sciences, medicine, immunology, nouns, borrowings reflecting a proper noun: ‘Prausnitz-Küstner’; name of an immunological test from the proper names Carl Willy Prausnitz and Heinz Küstner, bacteriologists). As promised by the author in the introduction, for every term Schulz outlines the semantic development and the contextual usage of German borrowings in present day English and the stylistic function they have in English texts. For example, in page 101 the author speaks about the adjectival borrowing ‘malerisch’ in English; it is a term pertaining to the painting lexicon, for which OED gives the following definition: “relating to a manner of painting characterized more by the merging of colors than by the more formal linear style; painterly”. The meaning of this term is very near to “picturesque” and its use is more specific in English than in German language (in Duden On-line ‘malerisch’ is something “typisch für die Malerei”, typical of painting).

In the third and last Chapter Schultz gives an extensive and detailed summary of her work and draws some interesting conclusions. First of all, the author states that she has identified several types of lexical borrowing in her study: most of

them are adaptations and loan translations, but there are also a considerable number of direct loans among German derived words and semantic loans. In the minority are loan renditions, loan creations, pseudo-loans and back-borrowings. Subsequently, the conclusions are divided into four sub-sections: 1) about the chronological distribution of the twentieth century German borrowings in English; 2) their semantic analysis; 3) their pragmatic / contextual use and their stylistic function; 4) the status of German today in contrast to English.

About the chronological distribution of borrowings it is extremely interesting to note that the great majority of them entered English during the first forty years of the 20th century (1538 out of 1958), whilst in the decades 2000-2009 and 2010-2015 no German lexical items have been borrowed into the English language. With the help of a graphic and a numeric overview, Schultz (pp. 284-287) gives us numbers and percentages of German borrowings in the various categories and their subgroups: 'Natural Science' is the sphere on which German influence was the most intense (in particular medicine and chemistry), then the second category is 'Civilization and Politics' and the third one is 'Mathematics and the Humanities'. For each of the sub-areas the author specifies also the decade during which German made essential lexical contributions. In regard to the core vocabulary, it is found that only 121 lexical items belong to the basic lexicon of EFL dictionaries; but also in this case the category 'Natural Science' is the most receptive one (56 borrowings), followed by 'Civilization and Politics' and 'People and Everyday Life'. Examples of the most frequent German words in the sphere of medicine can be 'histamine' and 'chemotherapy', from politics 'putsch' and 'blitzkrieg', about the everyday life we can quote 'bratwurst' and 'muesli'. Two other facts that Schultz wants to underline are that the temporal distribution of the lexical items which are part of the core vocabulary is different from that of the entire body of German borrowings (p. 293), and that "32 areas and spheres of life lack any borrowing that is part of the core vocabulary" (ibidem). For example a central category of the human life in the 20th century, 'Transport and Travelling', has no words or meanings that can be considered as borrowed from German. About the semantic analysis of borrowings the author points out that several lexical items which entered English have the same meaning of their equivalent in the donor language (such as 'blitzkrieg'), whilst a considerable number of words have a quite different meaning because of a process of broadening or narrowing. The term 'mutant', which reflects the German word 'Mutant', shows in English a sense which is unknown to the German language: from being a biological term for animals or genes which were subjected to a mutation process, it is now used in American slang to denote a person with antisocial or sociopathic tendencies. Another peculiarity, which Schultz' work highlights, is that not only words denoting abstract things or concepts underwent a semantic change, but also personal names or designations for animals had a semantic development; names of institutions, organizations or products do not generally show shifts in meaning. In the third section of this last chapter the author wants to give to the reader a summary of the more complete description of the pragmatic and contextual use and the stylistic functions of the German borrowings in English she discussed in the second chapter. In her corpus the author has found examples for every stylistic function listed in the first chapter (local color, precision, tone, vividness and variation of expression). Without entering the details, we can mention only some of the terms Schultz quotes: 'zugtrompete' (a slide trumpet) is a borrowing from German which was needed to fill a semantic gap in English because of the lack a concise equivalent (precision); 'Rottweiler', which designated a type of dog originally, now has a different meaning in English, because it denotes an aggressive person by metaphor (vividness). The very conclusion of the book is the section where Schultz makes comments on the present status of German in contrast to English. Since she noted in her work that no more borrowings have entered English from German language since year 1992, she tries to explain why German is no longer a donor language. The various hypotheses she produces are historical and cultural: during the last fifty years the English language and the American variant have replaced German and French as the lingua franca in Europe; also she notes the impact of the American culture, business and technical knowledge (see Busse & Görlach 2004: 14). Schultz underlines also the fact that the teaching of German as foreign language has been greatly reduced in England and that generally the interest of the English population in the German culture (and language) is not as vivid as before. This could lead to a decrease of German borrowings in English in recent times.

EVALUATION

This book of Julia Schultz fills a gap in English lexicology. The huge amount of data she collected from OED, EFL dictionaries and several other electronic databases allows her to provide an exhaustive look and a precise analysis of German borrowings into English during the 20th century. Her study is well done, readable and accurate, especially the description of the semantic change and the change of context of a word from German to English: she traces the sources of German lexical items and describes precisely the context in which these words are used in the recipient language. Overlooking the technical aspects of this study, I want to focus on some results which are relevant not only

for lexicography and lexicology, but also for the history of the German and English language. The overview of the chronological distribution of 20th century German borrowings in English is absolutely new; for every decade Schultz specifies the area(s) and sphere(s) of life in which borrowings are present and their percentage. This investigation permits her to determine also how German culture influenced the English world.

This work provides the first comprehensive research on the semantic integration of German borrowings into English and demonstrates that the former had a huge impact on the lexicon of the latter especially in the first forty years of the 20th century, although today it is common to emphasize only the influx of Anglicisms into German.

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ABOUT THE REVIEWER

I am a Ph.D student of the University of Pavia. My doctoral dissertation will be about the Semantics and Morphosyntax of bahuvrihi compounds in West and East Old Germanic Languages, using a Cognitive Linguistics framework (supervisor Prof. Silvia Luraghi).

Now I am a teaching assistant at the University of Pavia (Historical Linguistics, History of German Language and Cognitive Linguistics) and I work on valency classes of Gothic language in the project "Transitivity and Argument Structure in Flux". This project is funded by the Italian Ministry for Education and Research (MIUR) in the framework of the 2015 PRIN.

My research interests are Old Saxon morphology, Gothic syntax and morphology, Germanic Bahuvrihi compounds, Cognitive Linguistics applied to Old Germanic languages.

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