

The lexical contribution of English to So ay vocabulary expansion

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Résumé

L'emprunt lexical n'est pas un phénomène linguistique nouveau. Toutes les langues empruntent. La langue so ay ne faisant pas une exception, elle a emprunté aussi bien aux langues voisines qu'aux langues coloniales non voisines. L'anglais, beaucoup plus que le français, a énormément influencé le vocabulaire so ay. Pour mener cette étude, des données ont été collectées à partir d'un groupe de sujets d'âge avancé ayant séjourné dans des pays anglophones, et pour attester le déclin de ce vocabulaire, ces données ont été soumises à un autre groupe de sujets d'âge plus jeune, groupe qui ignore totalement l'existence de ce vocabulaire d'origine anglaise.

Abstract

Lexical borrowing is not a new phenomenon. All languages borrow. So ay is not an exception; it borrowed from not only from neighbouring languages, but also from non neighbouring colonial languages. English, even more than French, has heavily influenced the So ay vocabulary. To undertake this study, we collected the data from aged people who have been to English speaking regions, and to certify the decline of that vocabulary, the collected data were tested on younger people who showed that they totally ignored that lexicon.

Keywords: So ay, borrowing, loanword, donor language, recipient language.

Introduction

History sustains that Gao had known four stages in its evolution. Each stage was marked with the reign of a dynasty. The first of those dynasties is the **Koungorogossi** dynasty which ruled Gao from a period difficult to date to 670; the **Dia** dynasty, the second, ruled from 670 to 1325; as to the third dynasty, the **Sonni** dynasty, it ruled from 1337 to 1493; finally, the **Askia** dynasty, the fourth and last, ruled from 1493 to the Moroccan invasion in 1591¹. At the end of the 19th century, Gao was taken over by the French colonizers.

French colonization in Mali started in 1885 when Louis Faidherbe, the Governor of Senegal, built the Fort of Medine (Kayes). Colonization continued till 1960, the year of independence for most African states (including Mali).

At independence, though Mali had its own languages, the newly independent state adopted French, the colonizer's language, as its official language, at the expense of its own languages. The local languages were to be studied and analysed for their future use in education.

Mali is a landlocked country bordered by either French speaking or Arabic/Berber speaking countries. It has different ethnic groups each of which speaking its own language. The majority ethnic group in the North is the So ay community speaking the So ay language dominant in the area, while Bamanankan, the language of the Bambara ethnic group, remains dominant throughout the South.

The So ay language has been influenced by different neighbouring, and at times, non-neighbouring languages spoken in West Africa. In the field of livestock, So ay borrowed from Tamasheq (a neighbouring language) words like addiidi, azawa, bolbol, agguhel, ala, etc. In the same domain, So ay took from Fulfulde (a semi-dominant language in central Mali) words like baggal, jamde, and lahula, etc. In agriculture and food, the language took

¹ Hassimi O. Maiga. La Contribution Socio-culturelle du Peuple Songhay en Afrique.2006. Magreb Press Edition. pp-132-5

from Bamanankan words like *tiga dege*, *buuru*, *leemur*, and *leemurba*, etc. So ay also borrowed from Hausa a number of words such as *kulba*, *kulliya*, *takadda*, *gaaruura*, and *kaaniya*, etc. Last, like the other languages in the region, So ay has heavily been influenced by Arabic, mainly in religion and culture; as a rule of thumb, all the So ay words beginning with *alø* (the Arabic definite article) are taken from Arabic. Examples abound: *alsilaama*, *alman*, *aljanna*, *alhaasiri*, *alfaa-iki*, *alhamiisaa*, *alba-ar*, etc.

Colonial languages, sometimes not even neighbouring languages, also influenced the So ay language. For the language has recently taken from French a huge stock of words like *pantalo*, *-emiz*, *saaku*, *telefon*, *araji*, *portu*, *funeetara*, *lokkol*, etc. More strikingly, So ay equally took a lot of words from English: *toroza* (trousers), *layti* (light), *kanbaasi* (cavass), *loora* (lorry), *hanbaaji* (handbag), etc. It is hard to notice and believe that the words in the list above are taken from English because, like most languages, the So ay language borrows lexical items from donor languages, but adapts them to its own phonological system before absorbing them, so much so that those loanwords become hardly recognizable. Such adaptations appear necessary as the phonological systems of a donor language and a recipient language rarely coincide.

It is this last borrowing context which is of particular interest to the researcher. For Malian people did not have any direct contact with the English world. Yet, So ay speakers did borrow a huge stock of (technology related) lexical items from the English language. The interesting thing about that is that that word stock is being displaced by words taken from French. That situation allows raising some questions: In what conditions did So ay people come into contact with the English speaking world? How did So ay come to take in that word stock? What is the impact of that vocabulary on the evolution of the So ay language? What does the current situation look like?

1. Literature review

Languages have always influenced one another. The result is *borrowing* expressed in the social contexts of superstratum, substratum or adstratum influence. Borrowing (also known as loanwords) is usually a slow linguistic process, often noticed only after it has already taken place. The existence of loanwords is attested by the existence of lexemes common to two languages². The existence of loanwords equally indicates the existence of some historical contact between two languages. In plain words, there must be the existence of bilingual users who have at least some knowledge (otherwise, fluent knowledge) of both languages at some level. Additionally, loanwords are always lexemes: while they may be phrases in the model language, they are normally unanalyzable units in the replica language.

David Crystal (2003:56) defines a loanword as, *a linguistic form taken over by one language or dialect from another; such borrowings are usually known as loanwords* .

As a general rule,

Words taken into different recipient languages are sometimes spelled as in the donor language. Sometimes borrowed words retain original (or near-original) pronunciation, but undergo a spelling change to represent the orthography of the recipient language. But most donor languages adjust foreign words to fit recipient language pronunciation rules like constraints like morpheme structure, combinations of morphemes, and morphophonemic alterations ³.

Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor (2009:16) analysed the process of integration of loanwords in recipient languages and uncovered that,

When a word is borrowed, it has an effect on the lexicon of the recipient language. It may replace an earlier word of roughly the same meaning or simply be added to the lexicon where

² Demba Pamanta. 2000. Les emprunts lexicaux peuls au francais: Analyse linguistique et sociolinguistique a partir du journal Kabaaru. DNAFLA. In: Nordic Journal of African Studies 9 (3): 133-151 (2000).

³ David Crystal. 2003. A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. Blackwell Publishing. P.56.

no earlier word with that meaning existed or it may coexist with an earlier word of roughly the same meaning⁴.

While the concept appears very popular, it does not look very appropriate as in language matters, what is borrowed is rarely returned. As a result, languages do not seem to borrow; they rather seem to take words from each other. Fredric W. Field (2002:8) considers that *the recipient language is not expected to give or pay the word back; neither can the process be called 'stealing', in that nothing is actually taken or removed from the donor*⁵. There are very rare historical cases where words have been borrowed then returned: French took the word *budget* in the eighteenth century from English which had taken it under the form of *bougette* from old French. In the middle Ages, English had borrowed *annel* from French which took it from English in the fifteenth century under the form of *annel*.

Loanwords can be *cultural borrowings* or *core borrowings*. While cultural borrowings are loanwords by necessity, i.e., words brought about with new concepts, core borrowings appear as loanwords that duplicate or replace existing native words without any true necessity usually for reasons of prestige. Maria Clara Mondejar-Nicassio (2007:4) believes that *lexical borrowing occurs when the receiving language uses certain lexical items from a source language to fill a conceptual, linguistic or cultural gap that do not exist in the receiving language*⁶.

Variables which account for borrowability and the amount and kinds of loanwords are numerous. Fredric W. Field (2002) identifies three main ones: the intensity and duration of the contact of the languages, the number of users of the language and last, the political, economic and cultural influence of one group of speakers.

Over time, loanwords become lexicalised and users no longer feel that they are foreign words. When French took the English word *riding-coat* it lexicalised it into *redingote*. Similarly, when English took the French word *un napperon* it lexicalised it into *an apron*. The Japanese word *miruku* is an adaptation of the English word *milk* as Japanese lacks /l/ in its sound system.

While all language aspects may be affected by borrowing, the lexicon is by far the most typically affected (Maria Clara Mondejar-Nicassio, 2007). In support, Kirsten Malmkjaer (2000:208) favourably argues that, *lexical borrowing is one of the primary forces behind changes in the lexicon of many languages*⁷. That is the reason why a lot of powerful nations worry a lot about and control the entry of foreign words into their language. Uncontrolled borrowing can be conducive to a complete subordination of the recipient language to the donor language.

Loanwords are always adapted to the system of the borrowing language. Adaptations may be grammatical: the Arabic word *taliban* (students) is the plural of *talib* (a student). Languages like French or English which have recently borrowed the term use *taliban* as the singular form and *talibans* as the plural form. The same holds true with *uareg* (plural) and *argui* (singular): *uareg* has become the singular form and *uaregs* the plural form. Adaptations may also be seen in verb inflections of words borrowed by French. French easily adds *er* to obtain words like *kidnapper* *rappeler* etc.

Last, there are semantic adaptations of lexical items which have resulted in the new sense ascribed to the concept *taliban*. In Arabic, the word simply means *students* with the war in Afghanistan, the word has acquired the new meaning *afghan islamist and terrorist*.

⁴ Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor (eds.). 2009. *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook*. Walter de Gruyter Mouton. P.16.

⁵ Fredric W. Field. 2002. *Linguistic Borrowing in Bilingual Contexts*. Students in Language Companion Series John Benjamins Publishing Co. P.8.

⁶ Maria Clara Mondejar-Nicassio. 2007. *Lexical Borrowing Through Globalisation*. ANUPI. Mexico. P4

⁷ Kirsten Malmkjaer. (ed) 2000. *The Linguistics Encyclopedia*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group. P.208.

Additionally, most faux-amis can be explained by semantic adaptations. For the English word *journey* has semantically nothing to do with the French word *journee*

Crystal sees a distinction between:

Loan words: where both form and meaning are borrowed or assimilated with some adaptation to the phonological system of the new language (sputnik);

Loan blends: the meaning is borrowed, but only part of the form is (restoran);

Loan shifts: the meaning is borrowed, and the form is native (restaurent);

Loan translations: the morphemes in the borrowed word are translated item by item (superman from *bermensch*).

But why do languages borrow? Chantal Bouchard (1999)⁸ depicting the Quebecan context, finds that one can only borrow from the rich as the poor do not have what the rich have so much so that it's the rich that offer, and the poor take. But that does not seem to be valid everywhere as even 'poor' languages do offer to 'rich' ones. African languages (may be to a lesser extent) did offer words (bogolan, couscous, daba, dah, nere, etc.) to European languages.

Borrowing may occur because people feel like to change and be fashionable. For instance, there are some typically So ay words which have been displaced by words which originated from French because the younger generation of speakers preferred to adopt the French terminology, a language which enjoys more prestige in their eyes. That occurs when native speakers of a language freely and willingly reject part of the word stock of their language and embrace a more fashionable one, which in their eyes, looks more modern, more powerful and possibly of a higher standard. An example is when So ay speakers gradually shifted from their English origin word stock to a French origin word stock in modern So ay.

2. Need for the Study

The importance of the paper lies in lexicology and dictionary making where in word entries, the original language of foreign words and their meaning are specified. There are a lot of words the English origin of which is known or at least, not mentioned in dictionaries. This word stock taken from the English language is not in danger, but is dying as it is being displaced by the French vocabulary. So before it definitely dies, there is a need to study it, understand the conditions in which it was borrowed and preserve it in the So ay linguistic history. More significantly, very little is known about African languages. Consequently, this paper can be regarded as a contribution to the study of Malian languages.

2. Methodology

The data for this paper was collected from a sample of fifty people from villages of Commune Sonni Ali Ber (Gao). Their age ranges between fifteen and seventy. The sample is made up of two subgroups: an older generation and a younger one.

The older generation is mainly composed of people who have been to English speaking regions like Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi (Ghana) or to Kano and Lagos (Nigeria) in colonial and early post colonial times for work. When they came back to Gao (Mali), they brought both technology and the labels associated. Given that So ay people did not know that technology, they could not have words of their own to designate it. Therefore, they easily embraced it with the new vocabulary, of course with some adaptations to the So ay phonological system. It is good to signal that the donor language is the British variety of English spoken in former British colonies, particularly in Ghana and Nigeria.

To extract data from this subgroup of informants, discussions were organised around tea; the topics were all centred on trips to, stays in those English speaking areas and return to

⁸ Chantal Bouchard. 1999. On n'emprunte qu'aux riches. La valeur sociolinguistique et symbolique des emprunts. (Les grandes conférences). Edition Fides.

the homeland. Discussions were not structured, but the aim was to collect as many English words as possible.

The second subgroup of the sample was made up of people of a younger age who have never been to an English speaking country. Still around tea, the list is read to the group with the aim of determining whether the members were knowledgeable about the list of words collected from the first group or not. It appeared that they had no idea about the meanings of the words. Interestingly, when the meaning was explained, they appeared surprised and quickly gave the current equivalent, and that was usually in French.

3. Results and Discussion

The data collected has been tabulated and categorized, first into nouns and verbs, then into organisations, transportation, finance, food, clothing, military, names of countries or/and cities, etc. Each word is presented in normal English, then its equivalence in French (whenever available) is given and the current word representing it in modern So ay.

Section I: Nouns

Group I: Organisations			
Old So ay	English	French	Modern So ay
Ajan-i	Agency	agence	afians
Ajanti	Agent	agent	afian
Helluman	Headman	chef	jinebora
Kobala (-ize)	Cowboy	?	kobala-ize
Looya	Lawyer	avocat	awaka
Wasman	Watchman	gardien	gaddi e

Group II : Transportation			
Booda	Border	Frontière	froncar
Doroba	Driver	Chauffeur	-ofer
Haabo	Harbour	port	por
Looda	Load	Charge	-arffi
Loora	Lorry	automobile/véhicul e	moobil
Moota	Motor	Automobile	moobil
Pasinja	Passenger	Passager	pasafe
Sumoogol	Smuggling	trafic de	tarafiki
Teesa	Station	gare	gar

Group III : Finance			
Cenji / Tenji	Change	monnaie	tenji/ barmay
Pam	Pound. (money)	?	?
Sulay	Shilling	?	?

Group IV: Military			
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Fursi	Police	police	poliis
Fursiteesa	Police station	commissariat de police	kom-arya
Sooja	Soldier	soldat	sooja

Group V: Food (-related)			
Koppu	Cup	pot/coupe	poti/koppu
Poti / gulla	Pot	Pot	poti
TM ingam	Chewing gum	chewing gum	-ingam
Tiilifi	Tea leaf	(thé) Lipton	lipto

Group VI: Clothing			
Bondel	Bundle	ballot	Bo
Hanciti/ sanfiti	Handkerchief	serviette	Servyeti
Kaafinti	Carpenter	menuisier	Minizyer
Kanbaasu	Canvas	souliers	Sulye
Kootu	Coat	costume	Kostim
Piisi	Piece	piece	Piisi
TM eti	Shirt	chemise	TM emiz
TM ngleti	Singlet	débardeur	debarder
Teela	Tailor	tailleur	taayer
Toroza (subi)	Trousers	pantalon	pantalo (subi)
Waaca	Watch	montre	montar
Yaali	Yards	meetar	meetar

Group VII : Countries / Cities			
Jappan	Japan	Japon	flapon
Jappaniisi	Japanese	Japonais	flapone
Legos (u)	Lagos	Legos	legos
Najiriya	Nigeria /nai eri /	Nigeria	nigeria /niferiya/

Group VIII : Time			
Tem	Time	Heure	er (waati)
Tolfu	Twelve	Midi	miidi

Group IX: Miscellaneous			
Baaji	Bag	sac	baaji/ sak
Bileedi	Blades	lame	lam/ -iini
Bokoti	Bucket	seau	soo

Butal (ta-ooka)	Bottle	Bouteille	butal (kulba, ta-ooka)
Goota	Gutter	Caniveau	goota
Gootaboy	?	?	?
Fawda	Powder	Poudre	fudur
Hanbaaji	Hand bag	sac/ sacoche	saaku/ sakko-i
Karanfli	Kerosene (AmE)	Pétrole	petron /petrol
Konko—a	Contest	competition/con cours	konkur
Lanba	Number	Numéro	limoro
Layti (kaanya)	Light	courant/ torche	Kuura /tor-
Manki-i	Matches	Allumettes	almayti
Parpaganda	Propaganda	Propagande	parpaganda/p olitiki
™afi	Safe	cadenas	kullya
Soora	Storey	Etage	soora (etafl)

Section II: Verbs

Group I: Finance			
Old So ay	English	French	Modern So ay
Belu (ka)	Bail out (to)		
Ceku (ka)	Cash (to)		
Haaya (ka)	Hire (to)	Louer	luwe (ka)
Maaca (ka)	Marker (to)		
Tenji /Cenji (ka)	Change (to)	faire la monnaie	ka barmay

Group II : Transportati on			
Loodu (ka)	Load (to)	charger	ka -arfe
Paaka (ka)	Pack up (to)	Empiler	ka paaka
Sumoogol (ka)	Smuggle (to)	faire le trafic	ka tarafike

Group III : Sport			
Bogose (ka)	Box (to)	Boxer	bogose (ka)

Group IV : Time			
Leti (ka)	Late (to be)	être en retard	bara retar (ka)

An analysis of the items in **group one** uncovers that these sorts of organisations were unknown to the So ay society and culture. Regarding the linguistic level, given that the phonological system of So ay has no /ei/ sound, the vowel ə beginning the first two words of the list was adapted (agency, agent, etc.) and pronounced /a/. The rest of the sounds appear close to those of English. The same holds true of the word ɫooyaə where only the ending underwent an inflectional adaptation to fit the system of the recipient language.

As to the compound words, ɫhellumanə and ɫwasman,ə they underwent modifications in their first part only, not in the second, yet So ay perceives them as simple words. The word ɫKobalaə is hardly recognizable, and more, was semantically adapted: kobala (-ize) acquired the new meaning ɫanyone who dresses or behaves like a loutə In fact, the words were borrowed from non-native speakers (Ghanaians and Nigerians), and transported by non-native speakers (So ay visitors). That is the reason why most of them were totally distorted.

Group two pertains to transportation, a sector which was not developed and concepts related to that were basic. Consequently, words such as cars, drivers, passengers, harbour, etc. were unknown to the So ay world. The result was some phonological adaptations: first, there were adaptations of inflectional endings from English to So ay with the final ə Second, ɫtrə ɫdrə ɫprə ɫstə and ɫvə do not exist in So ay; that eventuated in the insertion of a vowel between the two consonants. Lastly, the word ɫlooraə (a lorry) got semantically broadened and acquired the new meaning ɫany carə

Concepts in the **third group**, very few, call for the world of finance, a world hardly known to So ay people. People had little, otherwise, no idea about finance, let alone currencies. Nevertheless, So ay took ɫɛnɟiə or ɫɛnɟi,ə (change) very close to the original English concept, but with an inflectional adaptation. The other two words, ɫpoundə and ɫshillingə underwent complete change. But their use was limited to explanations of events which happened in those Ghanaian and Nigerian regions. That is why there are question marks.

The **fourth group** has the characteristic that, in these words like many others, whenever an English word begins with ɫpə (powder, police, carpenter, etc), So ay begins the same word with ɫfə (fawder, fursi, kafinti, etc.). It is safe to underline that all the So ay words which have ɫpə are foreign origin words. That state seems to imply that in the proto-language, the /p/ sound did not exist.

The words listed in the **fifth group** were all lexicalised before their integration. The phrases ɫchewing gumə and ɫtea leaf,ə compound in the donor language, were lexicalised and integrated as single and simple words in the recipient language.

A concept which draws attention in the **sixth group** is ɫeelaə (tailor). In English, it normally refers to a person who sews clothes. But through a process of semantic shift, the word acquired the meaning of ɫa sewing machine,ə and the user (normally, the tailor), is called ɫeelataakawə (with the addition of two suffix morphemes appended to the root).

The **seventh group** displays the same general characteristics of phonological and inflectional adaptations. It is worth pointing out, however, that So ay has the tendency to double the /p/ sound whenever it is in a medium position (koppu, jappan, jappaniisi, sappa, etc).

The only element in the **eighth group** which deserves treatment is the word ɫolfuə Given that So ay has no /v/ in its sound system (as stated earlier), the ɫvə in ɫtwelveə was replaced by its voiceless counterpart ɫfə But in general, So ay replaces ɫvə by ɫwə (ɫverreə > weera).

The basic common feature in this **ninth group** is the phonological and inflectional adaptations. While the words ɫhanbaajiə (handbag) and ɫgootaboyə (someone who cleans gutters) are compound elements in the source language, they appear simple in the borrowing

language. For the word ÷aafiø underwent some semantic extension or shift and acquired the new meaning ÷padlockø There is an epenthetic insertion of vowels after the initial or middle consonants in ÷bileediø ÷butalø parpagandaø ÷dorobaø and ÷sooraø

The verb section displays the same features discussed earlier. It is worthy to underline that the words ÷koppuø ÷olfuø ÷legosuø ÷kanbaasuø ÷kootuø ÷ka beluø ÷ka cekuø ÷ka looduø etc. all underwent an inflectional adaptation which caused them to develop a /u/ sound in their endings.

Conclusion

Languages have always borrowed and will continue to borrow from one another. At a political level, some powerful nations might perceive lexical borrowing as a threat to their languages and decide to design policies to put limitations to the entry of foreign words into their languages. But the rapid development in science and technology is transforming the world into a global village with a kind of universal language which tends to be imposed upon everyone. That cannot go without lexical borrowing.

Up to the seventies and eighties, So ay was influenced by English. But recently, there have been less and less movements of people towards those English speaking regions, and more and more movements towards Bamako, a French speaking area. That is the reason why French is displacing English in that So ay area. So ay has taken a stock of words from English which need to be recognized and preserved. So, before that stock definitely dies, there is a need to study it and understand the conditions in which it was borrowed. In dictionaries, recognition should be made of the language of origin of that lexicon.

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