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Contents

1. Keynote Address at the International Seminar on Comparative and Contrastive Study of Chinese with Other Languages 11
– *Haraprasad Ray*
2. Shu Jing (书经): Book of History: Some Philological and Philosophical Dimensions 14
– *Arttatrana Nayak*
3. An Introduction to Some Basic Features of Chinese Language 42
– *Sun Xinquan*
4. Translation of Chinese Poetry into Bengali 51
– *Tandrima Pattrea*
5. A Sociolinguistic Study of the Development of the Chinese Language 58
– *Prof. Reena Ganguly*
6. Loan Words in Chinese and English Language 65
– *Dr. Avijit Banerjee*
7. Some Aspects of Determinative Sentences in Ancient Chinese Language 70
– *Arttatrana Nayak*
8. Traces of Indian Elements in Chinese Language and Literature 101
– *Dr. Manik Bhattacharya*
9. Analysis of 'You' Type Sentence ('有'字句) in Modern Chinese 106
– *Chiranjib Sinha*

Loan Words in Chinese and English Language

*Dr. Avijit Banerjee**

The term “loans” refers to words borrowed from other languages phonetically and semantically. The necessities of intercourse bring the speakers of one language into direct or indirect contact with those of neighbouring or culturally dominant languages. Each language has its unique features of grammar, phonetics, syntax, vocabulary, semantics and structure. That means the borrowing ability varies with the target languages. Some languages have strong borrowing ability, and are more likely to borrow a wider range of loans, while other languages have weaker borrowing ability. For example, English has a very strong borrowing ability. The loans in the English vocabulary are largely borrowed from French, Latin and Greek. French is the major source of loans in English. This is partly because the Norman French conquered and ruled England for a long period of time starting from the 11th century. When the early Germanic people of Northern Europe first learned of wine culture, it was only natural that they should adopt the Latin word “vinum” (English-Wine, German-Wein) for the strong beverage. Later when Christianity was introduced into England, a number of associated words, such as ‘bishop’ and ‘angel’ were included in the English vocabulary. Thus, the process of borrowing loan words from other languages has continued uninterruptedly down to the present day. The careful study of such loan words is an interesting study of the history of culture. One can estimate the role, which various people have played in the development and spread of cultural ideas by making a note of the extent to which their vocabularies have filtered into those of other people. There are just five languages that have had an overwhelming significance as carriers of culture. They are classical Chinese, Sanskrit, Arabic, Greek and Latin. It seems very probable that the psychological attitude of the borrowing language itself towards linguistic material has much to do with its approachability to foreign words. It is generally assumed that the nature and extent of borrowing depend entirely on the historical facts of cultural relations.

China is a country of many nationalities, and also a civilized ancient nation. In its long history of development and during the process of long-term interaction with the people of various countries, Chinese absorbed many loan words. During the Han dynasty, words were borrowed from the Huns (匈奴 *xiongnu*) and from the Western region (*xī yù* 西域) [a Han dynasty term for the area west of *yumenguan* (玉门关), including what is now (新疆 *Xinjiang*) and parts of Central Asia]. The words borrowed from the Huns are camel (骆驼 *luo tuo*), orangutan (猩猩 *xingxing*), etc. The words that came from the Western region are grape (葡萄 *putao*), pomegranate

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(石榴 shiliu), etc. After Buddhism was introduced into China, Chinese borrowed some Sanskrit Buddhist terms like Buddha (佛 fo), Sramana-Buddhist monk (沙门 shamen), etc. In modern times while assimilating Western culture, science and technology, Chinese borrowed more words from European countries and Japan.

Some of the loan words incorporated into the Chinese language are as follows:

- Latin:** (i) Opium (鸦片 yapian)
(ii) Aspirin (阿司匹林 asipilin)
- English:** (i) Nylon (尼龙 nilong)
(ii) Radar (雷达 leida)
- French:** (i) Ballet (芭蕾 balei)
(ii) Coffee (咖啡 kafei)
- German:** (i) Heroin (海洛因 hailuoyin)
(ii) Nazi (纳粹 nacui)
- Russian:** (i) Soviet (苏维埃 suweiai)
(ii) Rouble (卢布 Lubu)
- Mongolian:** (i) Gobi-The Gobi Desert (戈壁 gebi)
- Tibetan:** (i) Lama (喇嘛 lama)
- Uyгур:** (i) Ahung-Imam (阿訇 aahong)

Social and cultural contacts and exchanges will undoubtedly mean language contacts. Nations of different languages seek contact with each other for many reasons, such as cultural exchange, commerce, trade, war, conquest, colonization, immigration and geographical proximity. Different social and cultural contacts may lead to different degrees of language contacts. Borrowing of language is an important result of language contacts while borrowing words is the major part of language borrowing.

At various phases of Chinese history loan words were incorporated into the Chinese vocabulary. Among the words, some are still in use and others have disappeared. This is because now the objects that these words specify have disappeared from social life or the concept or idea that these words express does not conform or apply to the requirements of social life. Words that surfaced during the May Fourth Movement still in use today are as follows:

- (i) Call, appeal (号召 haozhao)
(ii) Youth League (青年团 qingniantuan)
(iii) Test (考验 kaoyan)

Words that emerged during the Cultural Revolution and still exist today are:

- (i) Party tyrant (党阀 dangfa)
- (ii) Capitalist Roader (走资派 zouzipai).

Loan words are incorporated into the Chinese language through the following three ways. These are either through transliteration (音译 yinyi), or translation (意译 yiyi) or through a combination of sound and meaning (意义 yiyi).

Loan words that came through transliteration are as follows:

English	Chinese
Coffee	咖啡 (kafei)
Olympic	奥林匹克 (aolinpike)
Cartoon	卡通 (katong)
Salad	沙拉 (shala)

Loan words that came through translation are as follows:

English	Chinese
Television	电视 (dianshi)
Basketball	篮球 (lanqiu)
Negro	黑人 (Heiren)
Aeroplane	飞机 (feiji)

The loan words in Chinese that came through the combination of sound and meaning are as follows:

English	Chinese
Bar	酒吧 (jiuba)
Jeep	吉普车 (jipuche)
Mango	芒果 (mangguo)

Over the past two decades, with the deepening of reform and opening up, the contacts between Mainland China and Hong Kong are increasingly closer in the areas of politics, economy and culture. At the same time more Hong Kong expressions are absorbed into Mainland Chinese. This is the so-called "Marching of Hong Kong Vocabulary" into Mainland China.

The vocabulary of Modern English is approximately half Germanic (Old English and Scandinavian) and half Italic or Romance (French and Latin), with increasing importations from Greek in science and technology and with considerable

borrowings from French, Dutch, Low German, Italian, Spanish, German, Arabic and many other languages. The English language itself is spreading because the British have colonized immense territories. The terms president, representative, legislature, congress, constitution, and parliament are all French. There are also a few English words that are derived from Chinese.

English words that came from Chinese through transliteration are as follows:

Chinese	English
功夫 (gongfu)	Kongfu
荔枝 (lizhi)	Litchi
炒面 (chaomian)	Chowmein.

English loan words that came through translation are as follows:

Chinese	English
豆腐 (doufu)	Beancurd
金鱼 (jinyu)	Goldfish
月季 (yueji)	Chinese rose

Incorporation of Alphabetic Words into Chinese Vocabulary

Since the 21st century, especially after joining the WTO, China has witnessed increasing flooding of alphabetic words into Chinese. Such words have an unofficial name 'hybrid'. Some of the alphabetic words that have been absorbed into the Chinese vocabulary are as follows:

English letters+

Chinese Characters	English Meaning
B 超 (B chao)	B ultrasonic diagnosis
e 时代 (e shidai)	Internet times, Information age
X 光 (X guang)	X-ray

Cyber Language

It is a language used in the network communication realm on the internet and is a special language for a group of people. It meets the netizens' communicational needs. The computer and internet - related words that have been absorbed into the Chinese vocabulary are a mixture of Chinese characters, pinyin, English letters and words and Arabic numerals. These expressions may seem strange, complicated and meaningless to those who do not use the computer and internet, but to the netizens,

they are familiar, friendly, practical, convenient, and efficient and can meet their communication demand to a great extent.

Some of the computer and internet – related words that have been incorporated into the Chinese language are as follows:

English	Chinese
On line	上网 (shangwang)
Personal Computer (PC)	Times PC 时代 (PC shidai)
Electronic commerce	电子商务 (dianzi shangwu)
Netizen	网民 (wangmin)
Software	软件 (ruanjian)

Now that China is a member of the WTO, and its contacts with the rest of the world are increasing, the process of mutual borrowing of Chinese and other languages will continue to intensify and grow.

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