In our poster, we want to address the question as to whether and why most languages have more trouble borrowing verbs than nouns, and which – if any – typological features of the languages involved have any significant impact on the simplicity or difficulty as well as on the available mechanisms and paths of importing a verb from one language into the other.

These issues were briefly addressed by MORAVCSIK (1975) on the basis of a small sample of languages. Further examples of verbal borrowing were collected by GEORGE HUTTAR and later by SØREN WICHMANN through the LinguistList. This poster will present first tentative results from a large-scale cross-linguistic study of verbal borrowings. As of April 2005, we have collected data in almost 100 donor-recipient combinations, covering most areas of the world and all of the major language families.

We will present the data on borrowed verbs and loan verb accommodation strategies we have collected and a classification of these, as given in WICHMANN / WOHLGEMUTH (forthc.). While some languages simply insert a root-like form of the verb into their own morphologies (as in 1-3), others use a (verbalizing) derivation (4-5) or a light verb like ‘to do’ (6-7), or, in rare cases, borrow parts of the inflectional paradigm along with the verb (8).

1) Ket < Russian
dasitaruyavet
   da-sitat-u-k-a-bet
   3SG.F.S-read-3.N.O-ABL-DUR-ACT
   ‘she reads it’
   < читать ‘to read’
   (VAJDA; WERNER)

2) Tasawaq < Touareg (Air)
ghá yilmáq
   I swim.PFT
   ‘I swam’
   < i-lmáq 3m.PFT of ēlmēq ‘to swim’
   (WICHMANN 2004 a,b)

3) Tasawaq < Touareg (Air)
ghá b-tásrìg
   I IPF-sneeze
   ‘I am sneezing’
   < tusrak ‘sneezing’
   (WICHMANN 2004 a,b)

4) Yakut < Russian
   Армии́а супууспальы дын, уонна кэлбээтэ̀гэ.
   Armiya-GA sulu:spa-LA:-A die-An, uonna kel-BATAх-(t)A
   army-DAT/LOC service-VR-CVB say-CVB and come-PSTPTCP.NEG-POSS.3SG
   ‘He (went off) to serve in the army and didn’t return.’
< служба ‘service’ (BRIGITTE PAKENDORF, p.c.)

(5) Meyah < Indonesian
di-ebe-belajar
1SG-LW-learn
‘I’m learning’
< belajar ‘to learn’

(GRAVELLE 2002)

(6) Modern Greek* < English (USA) *of migrants in the USA
kávei retire
kani retire
do.3SG retire
‘(s)he retires’
< retire

(MORAVCSIK 2003)

(7) Carib < Guianese French Creole
pentiré poko man
paint busy_with 3SG.cop
‘he is painting’
< pentiré ‘to paint’

(RENAULT-LESCURE 2004)

(8) Romani < Turkish
and o sxoljo ka siklos te okursun ta te jazarsun
in ART school FUT learn.2 COMP read.2 and COMP write.2
‘in the school you will learn how to read and write’

(BAKKER 2005)

Cross-checking typological features of donor and recipient language using data from The World Atlas of Language Structures (HASPELMATH et al., eds.), and augmenting this information with data on the type of language contact situation involved, we attempt to generalize over the processes of verbal borrowings and the grammatical and sociolinguistic factors involved in the selection of accommodation patterns.

References:


HUTTAR, GEORGE: http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/13/13-588.html


WICHMANN, SØREN: http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/15/15-1674.html