Journal of Translation and Languages مجلة الترجمة واللغات
ISSN : 1112-3974

Some Preliminary Observations on Processes of semantic borrowing in the Kabyle and Mzabi minorities of Oran

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Abstract: *It is inevitable to do without borrowing in bilingual contexts. This phenomenon is more accentuated in contexts where there are bilingual situations involving minority languages. Algeria in general and Oran in particular are interesting sociolinguistic contexts to study the phenomenon of borrowing within minority groups. The present paper makes some preliminary observations on borrowing as it is displayed by members of the Kabyle and Mzabi minorities of Oran. We will be concentrating on the processes of semantic borrowing in the speech of these speakers. This type of borrowing is characteristic of contact situations and particularly those involving minority groups whose language or language varieties are influenced by the language or languages of the majority speakers in one way or another. We will tackle different types of semantic borrowing such as cultural borrowing, calques, and neologisms. The semantic borrowings that are the most recurrent in the data are the ones involving cultural borrowings and calques. Many semantic borrowings are in fact idiomatic expressions that are used by the Algerian Arabic majority speakers of Oran. The Berber minority groups seem to display a process of semantic alteration and extension. Some semantic extensions have in fact integrated new meanings that are not present in the guest language.*
Key words: *semantic borrowing, cultural borrowing, calques, neologism, Kabyle and Mzab minorities.*
Abstract: *The present paper makes some preliminary observations on borrowing as it is displayed by members of the Kabyle and Mzabi minorities of Oran. We will be concentrating on the processes of semantic borrowing in the speech of these speakers. This type of borrowing is characteristic of contact situations and particularly those involving minority groups whose language or language varieties are influenced by the language or languages of the majority speakers in one way or another. We will tackle different types of semantic borrowing such as cultural borrowing, calques, and neologisms.*
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1. Introduction

Borrowing is present in many sociolinguistic situations. It is particularly noticeable in bilingual situations in general and in bilingual situations involving minority languages in particular. The Berber minority in Oran is a bilingual community whose language or languages are different from the variety of Arabic used by the majority of speakers in Oran.

The present paper addresses the issue of semantic borrowings in the Berber varieties of the Mzabi and Kabyle minority groups of Oran. Semantic borrowings are different types and they highlight the dynamicity of languages in contact. They also represent a strong sign of the liveliness of Berber in Oran and the ethnolinguistic vitality of the Mzabi and Kabyle minority groups of Oran. The Algerian Arabic parts

of the data are transcribed phonologically and are underlined, the Standard Arabic parts are transcribed and underlined in bold and the French ones are written in Bold.

2. Semantic Borrowing

Semantic borrowing is a process whereby a speech community borrows meanings from the guest language and translates them literally or partially into its language. Semantic borrowings are different types. These include cultural borrowings, calques, neologisms, semantic alterations and extensions. We shall tackle these different types of borrowings in the light of a Berber-Algerian Arabic-Standard Arabic-French bilingual data in Oran.

3. Cultural borrowings and calques

Calques are semantic borrowings. They have been observed in many contact situations. Speakers translate the meaning as it is in the original language. Mc Mahon (1999: 207) states that calques are loan translations. He gives the example of the English word 'sky scraper' which is translated into French as 'Gratte ciel' and into Spanish as 'rasca cielo'. What is kept is the original meaning. We may also talk about syntactic calques if in addition to keeping the original meaning, the word order or syntactic structure of the loan is kept. We found in our corpus instances of these calques where both the meaning and the syntactic structure are kept as in the original form. For example, /jiwwət adu/ (*he got flu*) is taken from Algerian Arabic /darbah ərriħ/ (*he got flu*). We notice here that both the meaning and the word order of Algerian Arabic are kept in the borrowing /jəwwət adu/. Below are some instances from the data.

1-Des fois /a-n-əzɛaf/ **des fois** /n-at-saḍs-aɤ/

(Lit: Sometimes I get upset sometimes I laugh)

This is a cultural borrowing taken form the Algerian Arabic idiomatic expression /xaṭraat nazɛaf xaatraat naḍħaak/ (sometimes I get upset sometimes I laugh). This idiomatic expression is used by Oran Arabic majority speakers in Oran. It has also been attested among The members of the Kabyle and Mzabi minority groups in Oran.

2- Est-ce que les informations /ətsruħunt/ **par paquets** /neɣ jiwəθ jiwəθ/?
(Lit. *Do information go in packs or bit by bit?)*

This utterance contains /neɤ jiwəθ jiwəθ/(lit: Or one one) which is a calque from the French expression **une par une (**Lit. one by one**)**. This calque keeps the same meaning as the original French expression.

3- /ə-**nivo** jəlla jatwa:ṭa jəlla jətħuka mʕa tmurθ/

(Lit. *The level is lowering; it is touching the ground)*

This utterance is a calque from the Algerian Arabic /ənivo rah jṭeħ rah jtuʃi larḍ/ (*The level (of instruction) is so low that it touches the ground)*. This is a typical expression used in Oran Arabic to talk about the level of instruction in our schools. When it is borrowed in M'zabi, it becomes not only a semantic calque but it also represents a cultural borrowing.

4- /ruħ markajas ju məʃtari at tbarkiḍ aswawəl uɣlub/
(Lit. *Go take the order of the customer. Stop talking so much*)

This utterance is a semantic borrowing from an expression used by traders in Algerian Arabic /ruħ marki ləl məʃtari/ (*Go and get the customer's order*) and another expression often used in Algerian Arabic /barka ma tahdar bəzzəf/ (*Stop talking so much!*). We notice that it is also a syntactic calque in the sense that the original order of words in Algerian Arabic is kept in the borrowed expression in M'zabi.

5- /hami taxzarḍ di ɣil naʃi dani/ (Lit. *Why are you staring just at me here?*)

This is a calque from Oran Arabic expression /ʕlaʃ rak tʃuf fijja ɣir ana hnaja/ (*Why are you staring at me only?*). The semantic calque appears in the expression as a whole while the syntactic calque appears in the word order which is the same as the one which exists in the original expression in Algerian Arabic.

6- /siwəl siwəl awəl iʃətʃilləl maʕnəs iɣirətʃ/
(Lit. *Talk, talk, the talking is for you but the meaning is for someone else!)*

This utterance is a cultural borrowing in the sense that it represents a proverb in Oran Arabic. This proverb has been borrowed in M'zabi. It is at the same time a cultural borrowing[1] and a calque. The original proverb in Oran Arabic is /lhadra lija wəl maʕna ʕla ʒarti/ (Lit. *The talking is for me, the meaning is for my neighbour*). This proverb is used when someone feels that he is not directly addressed or that he is addressed through someone else.

7- /at tbəlʕaḍ ðag sən/ (Lit. *You will close (in) all of them*).

[1] Cultural borrowings are, in general, proverbs borrowed from another culture.

This is a calque from the variety of Algerian Arabic used by university students in Oran. It is often used by students when they talk about passing (expressed in terms of 'locking a module') or failing an examination. The informants here are Berber students living most of their time in the university campus and they are in constant contact with students using Algerian Arabic. These Berber speakers belong to both communities. They belong to the community of Berber speakers, and to the speech community of students of the University of Oran. These Berber speakers use the same expressions as their Arabic counterpart, sometimes in Arabic and some other times in Berber. Therefore, we may sometimes here them say /bəlləʕtəl/ module (Lit. *I locked the module*) (I got the module).

8- /ur qabblən ðəg wəxxam/ (Lit. *They do not accept in my house*)

Here, the calque is /ðəg wəxxam/. It represents a semantic borrowing taken from Algerian Arabic /darna/ (Our house). In fact, this expression means (*our / my parents*). It is often followed by /ma jaqqablu∫/ or / ma jəbɤu∫/ to mean (*my parents do not / will not accept*). It is also a syntactic calque because the word order of the original expression is kept in the borrowed form. We can add that it is a semantic core borrowing since the equivalent exists in Berber /θawa∫ult/.

4. Neologisms

In terms of meaning, some borrowed items have a different meaning from the one of the original language. They may also gain an additional meaning which is different from that of the language where it is borrowed. This process produces Neologisms which are obtained either through semantic extension, through semantic alteration, or through compounding processes.

5. Semantic Extension, Alteration, and Compounding

Semantic extension and alteration are two processes which are related to the semantic development of loans in the host language. In semantic extension, a loan comes to gain one or more additional meanings to the one it has in the source language as in /θxaðmaɖ/ *(You worked ~ You did)* which comes from Algerian Arabic /xdam/ (*He worked*). We see here that not only the meaning has been kept as in the original form from Algerian Arabic, but it has also been semantically extended to (*He did*).

Semantic alteration, on the other hand, occurs when the loan acquires a different meaning in the receipt language (M'zabi in this case). An example of semantic alteration would be the M'zabi form /iʕəssəs/ *(the summit of a Mosque)*

which has been borrowed from the Algerian Arabic form /ʕassas/ *(a guard)*. We notice here that from the meaning for a 'guard' the alteration produced a different meaning to refer to 'The summit of a Mosque'. In other words, speakers may use a word with a meaning which is completely different from the one in the donor language.

The pre-requisite condition for this is that the loan has to be well established in the host community. So the loan has to remain for some time in the receipt language to undergo the process of alteration. Hope (1950)[2] argues that semantic innovation (extension and alteration) takes place in loans that have been fully assimilated in the speech community. This means that the more a word is accepted and its use is generalized in the community, the more likely it is to change meaning or to gain additional meaning. As a result, the semantic field of loans is either widened (extended) or completely altered (or changed). Loans as native language items are subject to semantic change. In this line of thought, Hope states that 'lack of semantic transparency certainly contributes to the unpredictable semantic development of words' (ibid: 343). In the corpus, we found some examples of semantic extension and alteration. We shall give some of them below.

6. Examples of Semantic Extension

9- /θxaðmaḍ/ (*You worked / You did*) comes from the root /xdam/ in Algerian Arabic which means '*he worked'*. When this form is borrowed into Kabyle it takes an additional meaning to the one which already exists in the donor language. In Kabyle, the form /θxaðmaḍ/ has two meanings.

The first meaning is '*you worked'* and it is the donor language meaning as in /θxaḍmaḍ ði/ l'examen /n θaʕrafθ neɣ walu/ *(Lit. Did you work well in the exam of Arabic or no)*

The second meaning is '*you did* and it is the extended meaning as in /jiwəθ θuɣ aʕrav as jəxðəm ak ajən θəvɣa/ (Lit. *One woman married an Arab who would do as she likes*) which in fact means (*A Berber woman married an obedient Arab husband*)

10- /tamrajit/ (*A mirror / a TV set*)

This form is a noun which is borrowed from the Algerian Arabic /mraja/ 'A mirror'. When it is borrowed to M'zabi, this form takes two meanings.

- The first meaning which represents the donor language meaning as in /awid tamrajit/ (*Give me the mirror*)

[2] In Hassaine, Z. (1984: 354).

- The second meaning is an extended meaning as in /at ʈaffəð tamrajit/ (*Switch off the TV* set).

7. Examples of Semantic Alteration

11- /ətt-faʈr-að/ (*Take your breakfast*)

This form is a verb /fʈar/ means 'having one's lunch' in Algerian Arabic. When it is borrowed to M'zabi under the form of /əttfaʈrað/ it rather means 'Take your breakfast'. So the meaning has shifted from 'Lunch' to 'Breakfast'. This is a case of semantic alteration since the original meaning in Algerian Arabic is lunch and in M'zabi it means 'breakfast'. The form for 'Lunch' in M'zabi is /aɤʒar/.

12- /tʐaliʈ əl fʒar/ (*The sunrise Prayer*)

The form /fʒar~faʒr/ in Algerian Arabic refers to 'the Prayer for dawn' rather than 'the Prayer for sunrise' which is /əʂʂubħ/. When /fʒar/ is used in M'zabi it means 'The sunrise Prayer'. Therefore, the borrowed form in M'zabi has shifted meaning. This is clearly a case of semantic alteration that is produced when /fʒar/is taken from Algerian Arabic to be used under a different meaning in M'zabi.

8. Examples of Compounding

13-a-ddin a-rraʂ(lit: religion race)(for god sake)

This compound form is a cultural borrowing that has been attested in Kabyle. It is the literal translation of the Oran Arabic idiomatic expression /addin ərraab(for god sake). The two elements of this compound noun are Algerian Arabic nouns which have been adapted to the Berber morpho-syntactic system through the affixation of the nominal affix /a/

14- /ʂħab aman/ (*Harbour customs officers*)

This M'zabi neologism is a combination of two lexical elements /ʂħab/ which is from Algerian Arabic and it means 'Those of', and /aman/ from M'zabi which means 'water'. This neologism means 'harbour customs officers. It doesn't exist in Arabic. We do not say /ʂħab al ma/ in Algerian Arabic, we rather say /əd diwana/ (*The Customs*).

15- /ʂħab tifira/ *(Tax officers)*

This M'zabi neologism is a combination of two lexical elements /ʂħab/ which is from Algerian Arabic and it means '*Those of'*, and /tifira/ from M'zabi which means '*paper'*. This neologism means 'Tax officers'. It doesn't exist in Arabic. We do not say /ʂħab al wraqi/ in Algerian Arabic, we rather say /ʂħab əlkõtrol/ or /ʂħab le zĩpo/ for '*Tax service officers'*.

9. Conclusion

The present paper has shed some light on the process of semantic borrowing as it is observed in the Berber minority groups of Oran. The preliminary analysis of the bilingual data of this paper highlights a tendency in these groups to display different patterns of such type of borrowing. The semantic borrowings that are the most recurrent in the data are the ones involving cultural borrowings and calques. Many semantic borrowings are in fact idiomatic expressions that are used by the Algerian Arabic majority speakers of Oran.

Compounding processes involving compound nouns whereby a part of the noun is from while the other one is from Algerian Arabic seem to be equally productive in the data under study here. The Berber minority groups that we have investigated in this paper seem to display process of semantic alteration and extension. This highlights the dynamicity of the process of borrowing and the one of languages in contact in the Berber minority of this city. Some semantic extensions have in fact integrated new meanings that are not present in the guest language. This finding and others reached in the present data push us to think about future perspectives in the analysis of borrowing in the Berber minority groups of Oran.

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