

The role of perceptual salience in bilingual speakers' integration of illicit long segments in loanwords



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Abstract

This paper investigates how bilingual borrowers integrate originally long vowels and consonants in loanwords from Arabic and Swedish into Turkish in illicit positions. Both historical corpus data and data from an elicitation task are used. The main focus is on the role of perceptual salience and the choice between adaptation and adoption as different integration strategies. The results show that length is accurately perceived in both cases of borrowing due to the particular linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts of second language acquisition. Phonologically long Arabic vowels and consonants as well as not phonologically but phonetically long Swedish vowels with high salience are adopted as innovations by the bilingual borrowers. The latter adoption confirms that the input to loanword integration is not phonological but phonetic in nature, i.e. the surface form. Phonologically long Swedish consonants with low salience due to short duration are, instead, adapted through shortening. This adaptation is done in production through a process called filtering in with the help of feedback from perception. The paper proposes that perceptual salience plays an important role not only in monolingual but also in bilingual borrowing by concluding that high perceptual salience is necessary but not sufficient for adoption in bilingual borrowing. © 2014 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Since the early 1990s, the role of perceptual salience in loanword integration has been one of the most debated issues in loanword phonology. The space devoted to this debate in the special issue of *Lingua* 116:7 (2006) and in the edited volume *Loan Phonology* by Calabrese and Wetzels (2009) bears witness to its continued relevance. Essentially, the claim for perceptual effects in loanword phonology is that some structures in the input of loanwords are perceptually less salient, ergo more difficult to perceive accurately than others. Therefore, the adaptation of less salient structures can take place already in perception prior to phonological operations in production, thereby leading to so-called perceptual effects. In the last two decades, three different stances have emerged regarding the role of perceptual salience in loanword phonology. Perceptual salience is either (1) discounted as a negligible factor due to presumed accurate perception, (2) assigned a central role as the main factor behind the inaccurate perception of some structures, or (3) assigned a role in prioritising which accurately perceived structures should be retained in production. The accuracy of perception is, thus, of great importance for the different stances and is crucially linked to the degree of bilingualism in the context of borrowing. The general assumption in the literature, which is implicit in the first two of the mentioned stances, is that we should not expect

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to find perceptual effects when the borrowers are bilinguals. This paper will, however, challenge this assumption and show that perceptual effects are also attested in bilingual borrowing and that they are of the type that the third stance envisions.

1.1. Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to explore the role of perceptual salience in two cases of borrowing where the initial borrowers are known to be bilinguals. It will be argued that the attested type of bilingualism in both cases enabled the borrowers to accurately perceive the donor language structures in question. Hence, the stances that will be explored in this paper are the first and third stances which assume accurate perception. Extra attention will be devoted to the third stance because it is the only stance that theoretically allows for perceptual effects in cases of accurate perception. A further objective is to explore the choice between adaptation and adoption (i.e. non-adaptation) as possible integration strategies and to investigate if perceptual salience has a role to play in this choice.

The first case of borrowing involves historical Arabic loanwords in Ottoman Turkish that were borrowed by the bilingual elite who had high but non-nativelike proficiency in Arabic. The second case involves elicited data on contemporary Swedish borrowings in Modern Turkish spoken by nativelike bilingual heritage speakers in Sweden.¹

The linguistic object of the investigation is the phonological integration of illicit long segments. More specifically, the paper will focus on long vowels and long consonants in Arabic and Swedish that occur in the word-final closed syllable because this is a phonological environment where segment length distinctions are typologically marked and not attested in native Turkish words. Example 1 illustrates actual words of this type that are included in the data.

	DL: Arabic	DL: Swedish
(1) a. Long vowel in a closed syllable	/di:n/ [di:n] 'religion'	/vik/ [vi:k] 'bay'
b. Long consonant in word-final position	/his:/ [his:] 'feeling'	/dam:/ [dam:] 'pond'

Segment length is particularly suited for exploring the role of perceptual salience. Firstly, it has a concrete measurable phonetic correlate: segment duration. Secondly, the phonetic status of the segments can be easily distinguished from their phonological status, i.e. their distinctiveness. As Example 1 illustrates, both donor languages display phonetically long segments in their surface forms. However, there is a mismatch between underlying and surface length in Swedish, where segment length is phonologically distinctive in consonants but not in vowels (Riad, 2014:164–176). In contrast, segment length is distinctive in both vowels and consonants in Arabic (de Jong and Zawaydeh, 2002). Hence, these differences will enable us to explore if the input to loanword integration is phonetic or phonemic.

1.2. Three stances regarding the role of perceptual salience in loanword integration

The first stance regarding the role of perceptual salience, which I will refer to as the *no-filtering stance*, claims that all structures in the loanword input are perceived accurately (LaCharité and Paradis, 2005; Paradis and LaCharité, 1997, 2008; Paradis and Prunet, 2000; Jacobs and Gussenhoven, 2000; Paradis and Tremblay, 2009). This stance is intimately connected with an established model of loanword integration called the Phonological Stance Model.² Its central claim is that borrowing is done by bilinguals, as put forward by Paradis and her collaborators. This model postulates that lexical borrowing necessarily entails knowledge of the donor language. Hence, bilinguals do the initial borrowing and set the standard for the wider speech community. A necessary consequence of the borrowers' bilingualism (which this model seems to interpret as nativelike proficiency in both languages) is that inaccurate perception does not occur. Therefore, adaptation is assumed to take place exclusively in production and the input to loanword integration is assumed to be phonemic in nature, i.e. the underlying form in the bilinguals' donor language lexicons. As we shall see in section 3.2, the data in this paper clearly disproves this model's claim that the input is phonemic because non-phonemic Swedish vowel length is adopted by the bilingual borrowers. Furthermore, the Phonological Stance Model recognises that adoption of foreign structures (e.g. so-called loan phonemes) can be an alternative to their adaptation depending on the degree of societal bilingualism in the context of borrowing.

The second stance claims that those structures in the loanword input that have low salience will be perceived inaccurately, i.e. not perceived at all or perceived differently from their original form. Hence, whole segments or some of their properties can be filtered out in perception. This means that they are not present in the perceived input form that is

¹ The term "loanword" is used in this paper for established and conventionalised borrowings whereas the term "borrowing" is used more generally.

² The names of the mentioned models in this paper are taken from Calabrese and Wetzels (2009).

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