

LOAN WORD ASSIMILATION IN THE GERMAN LANGUAGE:

A HISTORICAL APPROACH

by

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(Under the direction of Peter Jorgensen)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the phenomenon of loan word assimilation in the German language, both in its historical and contemporary contexts. This thesis begins by examining the phenomenon of lexical assimilation during the late Roman era into the early Christian era, and then traces the development of this phenomenon through significant periods of loanword assimilation up to the present. The thesis culminates in an analysis of the similarities and differences between the modern era of loan word assimilation and previous periods, and concludes that advances in modern society, particularly in the realm of communications have significantly altered the phenomenon of loan word assimilation, and thus demonstrate the inherent uniqueness of the modern phenomenon of lexical assimilation.

INDEX WORDS: Loan word assimilation, German, Lehnwörter, History of the German language, Role of English in German, Lexical Borrowing, Lexical Assimilation, Historical Linguistics, Sociolinguistics.

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DEDICATION

To Deanna, who supported me from the very beginning of this long process, and never lost faith in my ability to bring it to completion.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The role of interaction between languages is extremely important to the dynamism exhibited by most languages. Indeed, it is widely accepted by dialectologists today that languages evolve and develop often as a result of outside influence from neighboring languages. This phenomenon leads to change within a language on every level, from the phonological to the semantic. One need look no further than the linguistically static language of Iceland, which remains virtually unchanged on the morphological and lexical levels after 1000 years of isolation, to see the effect of linguistic insularity. Although modern Icelandic differs phonologically from the Old Norse language of early settlers, Old Norse texts are still intelligible to modern speakers of Icelandic. In comparison, the writings of Ælfric, the author of a series of Catholic homilies in Old English between 980 and 995 C.E., would be unintelligible to an untrained native speaker of modern English. Indeed, the person would be unlikely to even realize that the text is related to English, and it would be highly unlikely that the person would be able to do more than understand an occasional word in the text. This discrepancy between modern Icelandic and modern English can be explained by the high level of outside linguistic influence found in English, relative to the exposure seen in Icelandic..

The linguistic dynamism observed in languages that interact with other, nearby languages is apparent in the assimilation of foreign terminology for novel ideas as well as objects that lack a fitting lexical item to describe them as a result of their novelty. As new items or actions are invented or discovered, new terminology is required to define them. Quite often, new lexical items are borrowed from the language of a socially or technologically dominant culture. The

phenomenon of lexical borrowing is quite common in contemporary society as a result of a variety of factors, including advances in communication such as the Internet and the media, the predominance of a single language on these media, and the massive numbers of new items and ideas produced by a modern society engaged in a technological revolution. Languages that are actively importing ideas and products from other languages will be at least somewhat predisposed to the importation of terminology to describe these new items. This phenomenon is easily observable in the modern, global society's current predilection for English loan items to describe new inventions and ideas.

Statement of Purpose

The German language's history of loan word assimilation provides an excellent backdrop for the analysis of modern lexical assimilation in German. Through the comparison and contrast of both the modern and historic phenomena of loan item assimilation, this thesis will attempt to determine those factors that have historically led to high levels of loan word assimilation, and analyze their effect on the modern language. In light of the modern phenomenon of German lexical assimilation, this thesis will analyze how modern German society integrates neologisms from the English language, and how this differs from earlier trends in lexical assimilation.

This thesis will begin its analysis of lexical assimilation with an analysis of the social factors that led to the predominance of Roman technology and religion on German culture, and the Latin terminology that accompanied this trend. Through early trade with German tribes, as well as the later evangelization of central Europe by Christian missionaries, Latin entered early Germanic as a source for lexical assimilation. Following the analysis of early sources for loan word transmission, the influence of other European languages on the development of the German

lexicon during the medieval, and New High German periods will be analyzed. Throughout this period, commerce and politics took on increasingly important roles in the assimilation of new lexical items. Characteristics shared by both the modern and historic periods of lexical assimilation will be explored, and the societal characteristics that contribute to the German-speaking world's predilection for loan borrowing will be analyzed. Following this diachronic analysis of German loan word assimilation, the thesis will delve into modern media culture in Germany, and explore how the modern phenomenon of lexical assimilation differs from earlier periods. This thesis will serve to analyze the historical context of loan word assimilation as a means of understanding contemporary assimilation in the German language.

Ultimately, this thesis will analyze the prevalence of lexical assimilation in the German language, as well as the root causes of German's predilection of assimilation, both in the historical setting and in contemporary language. This will allow for a comparison and contrast of the historical and contemporary phenomena to be made. Although some features of loan item assimilation in the German language remain unchanged in the contemporary period of assimilation, some aspects of modern society have led to changes in how new loan borrowings enter the German language. The phenomenon of lexical assimilation has evolved in much the same way that society itself has evolved. The analysis of this evolution will be at the core of this thesis, and will serve as its underlying purpose.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF LOAN WORD ASSIMILATION IN GERMAN

The modern phenomenon of loan word assimilation in German is closely related to the important role that English plays as a global language. The English language exists today as the culturally predominant language on Earth. Today, English is spoken by at least 1.1 billion individuals as either L1 or L2, and is spoken by roughly 400 million individuals as their native language.¹ Although there are languages spoken by larger populations, such as Mandarin Chinese (662 million L1 speakers and 1.3 billion L2 speakers), languages such as Mandarin are mainly spoken within a defined geographical area.² English is unique in the geographic diversity of its speakers. It is a truly global language, in that English speakers can be found on every continent in virtually every city in significant numbers. Quite often, English is used as a *lingua franca* between individuals who do not speak the same native language, but share English as a second language. Presently, there are more L2 speakers of English in the world than L1 speakers, thus distinguishing English as a language of international communication from other heavily spoken languages, such as Hindi and Arabic.³ The broad use of English worldwide has led to a high level of interaction between English and other languages globally, which in turn has led to

¹ B. Kachru, "English: World Englishes" *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed. Ed. Keith Brown, Vol. 4 (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006) 195.

² Gu Y., "Chinese," *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed. Ed. Keith Brown, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006) 344.

³ Kachru, 197.

extensive loan word assimilation of English terms in a wide variety of languages. Historically, the phenomenon of loan word assimilation extends into the distant past. In Europe, languages such as French, Latin, Greek, and to some extent Arabic, have all enjoyed periods of heavy assimilation into other languages. In the case of German, the assimilation of loan items as a result of interaction with other languages is quite apparent throughout its history. Surrounded as it is on all sides by a diverse set of languages, the German *Sprachraum*, by virtue of its location in the center of Europe, finds itself situated at a linguistic crossroads between several different language families.⁴ To its east, German abuts several different Slavic languages, as well as the linguistically unrelated Hungarian, a member of the Finno-Ugric family. To its south and west, German mingles with the French and Italian languages. It is only to the north that the German language borders on the domain of other Germanic languages. Thus, the geographic location of German at a nexus point of European languages and cultures has created an environment in which loan word assimilation from other nearby languages occurs to a significant extent.

The location of the German language in the center of Europe has led to the development of German as a language that actively assimilates terminology from the languages that surround it, particularly those which enjoy prestige status within Germany. Thus, it comes as no surprise that assimilations from French and Italian are more prevalent in German than assimilations from the Slavic languages, as these were not granted the same level of prestige status in Germany as the languages to Germany's south and west. At the same time, the German language has exerted influence on the Slavic languages, which viewed German as a prestige language.⁵ Therefore, the effect languages have on one another is at times a function of their perceived status, relative to

⁴ Stephen Barbour and Patrick Stevenson, *Variation in German: A Critical Approach to German Sociolinguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1990) 14.

⁵ Barbour and Stevenson, 29.

one another. A language whose perceived status is high relative to another language will have a greater effect on the latter language than a language whose perceived status is lower, as has been observed in the case of the German language relative to its neighbors. Whereas French, Latin and English have all exerted tremendous lexical pressure on the German language, few lexical items have been assimilated into German from the eastern boundary of the German-speaking area, where eastern European languages, such as Polish, Czech and Hungarian, have not enjoyed a high enough prestige status historically to affect the German language significantly.

The tendency of the German language to assimilate foreign words is not a constant phenomenon. Throughout recorded history, the German language has undergone periods of heavy lexical assimilation, followed by reactionary periods of loan word isolationism. Latin, Greek, French, and Italian have all achieved high levels of popularity as sources for lexical borrowings in the German language at different times. Most recently, particularly in the period following the Second World War, English has been the predominant source of new loan items, despite vocal opposition to the assimilation of Americanisms as well as more general Anglicisms from groups hoping to maintain the German language's linguistic identity and purity. The German language purity movement, led by groups such as the *Verein Deutsche Sprache*, opposes the unnecessary acceptance of new loan words into German, particularly from English, except where absolutely necessary as a result of the absence of a suitable, etymologically German term. Groups such as this, along with other, similar groups, are symptomatic of the unease felt by some German speakers that their language is in the process of losing its linguistic purity through adulteration by foreign languages. Most recently, the English language has been the target of criticism, as a result of its current status as the predominant source of loan items in German. Although the concept of linguistic purity in a language is dubious at best, movements whose

purpose is to somehow maintain the purity of German have enjoyed a high level of popularity in certain circles. They serve as a voice of opposition to the natural tendency languages have to borrow terms from foreign languages that share a close socio-political or economic relationship with their own. These groups undoubtedly possess diverse motivations for their opposition to loan word assimilation, however it is likely that at least some opposition to lexical assimilation in German derives from a sense of national identity, and the fear that this identity will somehow be weakened by the addition of foreign words to the German language. According to Peter von Polenz, nationalism and language purity movements are closely related:

Der Sprachpurismus hat sich in Deutschland – wie in anderen Ländern – immer im Zusammenhang mit einer politischen Aktivierung des Nationalgefühls zu Höhepunkten gesteigert: nach dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg, nach dem Niedergang der Napoleonischen Herrschaft, nach der Reichsgründung von 1871 und beim Ausbruch des 1. Weltkrieges.⁶

During each period of strong national sentiment in the German-speaking world, the purity of the German language has been viewed by some to be threatened. Particularly during times of war and political strength, the assimilation of loan items is perceived as undesirable, and a threat to the identity of German speakers.

A noteworthy exception to this tendency for the language purity movement to gain traction during periods of strong nationalist sentiment can be seen during the rise to power of the National Socialist party. Whereas in earlier periods, language purity and nationalist movements correlated predictably with one another, the National Socialist movement did not engage in a purge of foreign linguistic influence. As Peter von Polenz points out, although some academics

⁶ Peter von Polenz, “Sprachpurismus und Nationalsozialismus”, *Nationalismus in Germanistik und Dichtung: Dokumentation des Germanistentages in München vom 17.-22. Oktober 1966*, ed. Benno von Wiese und Rudolf Henß (Munich: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1966) 80.

of the period pushed for a systematic purge in the German language of foreign terms, these calls were ignored by Adolf Hitler's administration.⁷ This stemmed undoubtedly from the administration's own reliance on foreign terms for the purpose of semantic control of terminology used in National Socialist propaganda. Hitler and his subordinates relied on the use of foreign terminology in their public communications quite heavily – indeed to such an extent that some academics decried their reliance on foreign terminology in the academic journal *Muttersprache*.⁸ This reliance on the use of foreign terminology in speeches and press releases allowed the National Socialist party to dictate the interpretation of these terms as it deemed fit. Whereas terms native to the German language possessed deeply ingrained semantic meanings in the psyche of German speakers, new foreign terms did not, and thus they could be defined as the party deemed fit.

The need for language purity felt by groups opposed to loan word assimilation implies an ideological link between their sense of national identity and language. This coupling of language and identity is hardly new, and typically reflects the overall strength of nationalist sentiment within the German sphere. Generally speaking, the popularity and power of the anti loan word establishment waxes and wanes according to the strength of nationalism within the German-speaking world. In periods of strong nationalism, the resistance to lexical assimilation is strong, during periods in which the sense of self is less bound to nation, the resistance to new loan items decreases.

The contemporary period of loan word assimilation in German differs in some respects from earlier periods. Unlike previous periods of lexical borrowing, the contemporary movement

⁷ Von Polenz, 83.

⁸ Von Polenz, 82.

in Germany is a force driven in part by marketing forces in the media. Modern American terms have begun to enter the German language via new types of media such as magazines, television, and the Internet. Advertisements often utilize English slogans and catch phrases to sell products. Merchandise is given English names in order to increase its appeal as a result of the perceived prestige status of English among certain groups of German consumers, particularly those who attended schools recently enough to have been exposed to English language courses from an early age. As a result of the predominant nature of English on the Internet as the *lingua franca* of online communication and programming, English vocabulary relevant to the Internet has been borrowed heavily into German. In addition, youth slang from American English has also undergone assimilation into the German youth vernacular to a significant extent. Although some elements of assimilated youth language can undoubtedly be traced back to Internet sources, other important vectors for this assimilation include American films and television shows which have achieved a high level of popularity in German popular culture. These and many other factors have led to an astonishing rate of lexical assimilation from English over a period of little more than fifty years.

Although loan items in the German language stem from a wide variety of sources today, it can be argued that the modern media have played a very significant role in loan word assimilation, particularly in its association with the marketing of novel consumer goods which often gain popularity in the United States before being exported to Europe. This differs from earlier periods of lexical assimilation in that previous periods were related largely to the dynamics of class, and the perceived need by members of the educated elite to differentiate their language from that of the lower classes. Although earlier periods of heavy lexical assimilation were driven to some extent by media influence, the role of the media in society has grown

tremendously as universal literacy has increased and the ease with which material can be cheaply printed has developed.

Prior to the pervasive media culture of modern society, the assimilation of loan words was often an upper-class phenomenon, which then trickled down through the social strata until a new lexical item permeated all levels of society. Indeed, if one analyzes the period of French loan word dominance during the 18th century, the prevalence of French loan item use in the German of the upper class is overwhelming. Authors of the time, such as G.E. Lessing, satirized the infatuation of the upper class with the French language. In Act IV of his play *Minna von Barnhelm*, Lessing ridicules the tendency of the German upper class to speak French exclusively, even when there is no apparent need to speak French. The character Minna von Barnhelm states the importance of speaking German while in Germany, and insists that her noble interlocutor should speak German since he is obviously capable of doing so.⁹ Such subtle criticisms of the aristocracy's tendency to use French in the late 18th century were emblematic of the growing language-purity movement in Germany at the time. The prevalence of French use among the upper class during the 18th century led to the formation of groups in the 19th century, such as *Der Verein für Deutsche Sprachreinheit* and *Der Allgemeine Deutsche Sprachverein*, which opposed the influx of French into German.¹⁰ Periods of heavy lexical assimilation have often been accompanied by vocal opposition by certain members of society, who feel that their national identity is threatened by outside linguistic influences.

Indeed, these periods of assimilation are often preceded or followed by periods of strong antipathy against the assimilation of loan words, which often include calls for the purging of

⁹ G.E. Lessing, *Minna von Barnhelm* 1767 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003) 66.

¹⁰ John T. Waterman, *A History of the German Language* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1991) 176.

foreign terms from the German language. Following the fall of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, the German language recoiled from the heavy lexical borrowing from French that had occurred throughout the 18th century. To an even greater extent, the rise to power of the Prussian monarchy in the German Empire in 1871 accompanied an upswing in the vocalism of the language purity movement. Indeed, it was in this period that military ranks that had previously been derived from French were replaced with German terms. Loan words were systematically removed from the language, and terms for new items, e.g. the telephone, were provided with German equivalents, e.g. *der Fernsprecher*. The popularity of loan word assimilation and language purity appear to be diametrically opposed to one another in the history of the German language: as the popularity of language purity wanes, the assimilation of new terms from foreign languages increases.

French and German bilingualism in German society during the 18th century was an important underlying reason for the popularity of French loan item assimilation in German. It is important to note that the phenomenon of bilingual elitism is not unique to the late 18th century. Rather, the prevalence of English loan borrowings in contemporary German derives in part from a similar sense of linguistic exclusiveness. The use of English in modern German discourse establishes an elitist standard, in that one must have some knowledge of English in order to fully understand new loan items that have not been fully assimilated into the German language. As with French during the 18th century, the use of English loan items in German discourse serves to establish a social hierarchy based on level of education.

The extensive use of English in the German press has been characterized as a “*Geheimsprache der Gebildeten*”, in that English terminology is used to create a sense among readers that they are privy to information that cannot be comprehended by some members of

their own society.¹¹ As in previous eras, the phenomenon of loan word assimilation is to some extent an elitist movement. The use of loan words is certainly higher among the upper classes, namely those who enjoy a high level of education, and are bilingual in English and German. However, as opposed to earlier periods, the Modern-day educational system of Germany has created a significantly better educated populace at all levels of society, reducing the extent to which elitism plays a role in the use of loan items, as nearly all contemporary German school children receive some form of English language education, regardless of their educational track, or the potential need for English fluency in their later careers. Indeed, English-German bilingualism today, particularly among individuals who matriculated into the German educational system after the Second World War, is a much more widespread phenomenon than foreign language bilingualism ever was during any era prior to the Second World War. This is largely a result of universal education requirements that greatly surpass earlier programs in their egalitarianism and breadth of material covered by all students regardless of vocational track. This has led to a highly bilingual population in Germany, and reduced the elitist factors that contributed to earlier periods of lexical assimilation.

During the twentieth century, the media have evolved greatly as a result of technological advances. These technological advances have led to a much greater emphasis on advertising revenue as a source of income for media outlets. Particularly for new forms of media, such as television, radio and the Internet, advertisements have supplanted the traditional subscription fee as the primary avenue of income for publications. Today, media outlets serve the ostensible purpose of transmitting information to their audience, while concurrently exposing the audience

¹¹ Wolfgang Viereck, "Zur Thematik und Problematik von Anglizismen im Deutschen", *Studien zum Einfluss der englischen Sprache auf das Deutsche*, ed. Wolfgang Viereck (Tübingen: Narr, 1980) 21.

to a wide variety of advertisements and marketing campaigns, thereby encouraging them to purchase goods and services from the companies that commissioned the advertisements. Information, provided by the media outlet as the audience is exposed to advertisements serves to keep the audience's attention. Thus, the marketing of goods and services has become one of the major sources of income for modern media services. This can be easily demonstrated by the predominance of advertisement-based profit models in the media today. Few, if any, modern media outlets rely primarily on a system of subscription fees to earn a profit. Indeed, many Internet websites for German newspapers no longer charge any subscription fee at all for access to their product, i.e. information. *Die Presse*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Das Bild*, as well as many other German newspapers, all provide free content online, choosing to turn a profit from website advertisements rather than through subscription fees.

The linguistic implications of an advertisement-based economy for media outlets are significant. Modern media expose their subjects to a massive volume of advertising. These advertisements often make use of English terms to promote their products. Quite often, these terms are new to the German language when they are first presented. "*Dual-Zone*"-Cockpits have become available in high end automobiles in the German market, one sends *Short Message Service (SMS)* text messages from one's *Handy*. *Im Internet surfen* is an acceptable verb phrase, and one can purchase "*Shakin' Salads*" at McDonalds all over Germany, Austria and Switzerland. This tendency towards the adoption of English terms in the advertisement of products in German denotes a new trend in loan word assimilation in the German-speaking world.

This trend differs greatly from earlier periods in the history of the German language, in that the modern phenomenon is much more egalitarian than earlier periods of heavy foreign-

language assimilation. Widespread illiteracy among the poorer members of German society during previous periods of assimilation, as well as a lesser developed media culture, led to different mechanisms by which foreign words were assimilated into German. Previously, the phenomenon of loan word assimilation was largely a product of the upper class in their insistence on establishing an elitist form of German through lexical assimilation. The elite's bilingual tendency encouraged the influx of new terms from hegemonic languages of the time such as Latin and French. At first this was confined to Latin and to a lesser extent Greek loan items, as these were the languages of Christian evangelization. Later periods of loan word assimilation saw an influx of French and Italian terms, as a result of their status as languages of commerce and societal prestige. As the nobility adopted new terms from foreign languages, these terms made their way slowly into the everyday discourse of the general populace by way of a trickle-down effect. Over time, terms that enjoyed a vogue status in the nobility and upper class were adopted by members of the bourgeoisie and lower classes, who were often not bilingual themselves, but nevertheless utilized assimilated vocabulary as a result of its popular status.

In contrast, the contemporary German lexical assimilation phenomenon is largely related to heavy exposure to foreign terms through the media at all levels of society. The assimilation of loan words into German no longer occurs exclusively within the upper class, and has become egalitarian to a much greater extent than what was seen during periods of lexical assimilation prior to the technological revolution of the twentieth century. Although bilingual members of the German-speaking world still exert a significant influence on the direction of German loan word assimilation, contemporary German society is exposed to English at all levels. This heightened exposure has been largely facilitated by the technological advances of the twentieth century such as television, film and the Internet. This differs significantly from earlier periods of assimilation

in which illiterate and poor members of society could only be exposed to foreign vocabulary through conversation, as they lacked the means to assimilate loan items through other media, such as newspapers or written correspondence.

Similarities still exist between the modern phenomenon of lexical assimilation and that of previous centuries. Throughout history, the German language has undergone periods of heavy loan word assimilation during periods of social hegemony by foreign powers. Early on, this influence resulted from the political and social hegemony of the Christian church via the Latin language. Later, the political predominance of France, and the economic domination of Italian trade each contributed greatly to the high levels of influence these languages exerted on German's assimilation of foreign lexical items. Most recently, American English has experienced a position of worldwide social prominence for both economic and political reasons, leading to a massive influx of English-derived loan words in German, which had its beginning in the aftermath of the Second World War. The United States' position as an international superpower, combined with technological advances in communication, has created a linguistic environment in the German-speaking world conducive to this large influx of English loan items.

In any analysis of the phenomenon of loan word assimilation, it is important to note the various forms that assimilation can take. The most obvious form of assimilation is the direct assimilation of a term from one language to another without alteration. Examples of direct loans to German include terms such as: *Spaghetti*, *Computer*, *Pizza* and *Haute-couture*. These terms were adopted directly into the German language without orthographic change from their original languages. As a foreign term becomes deeply ingrained and accepted in a new language, it often undergoes orthographical alteration, so that it more closely reflects its pronunciation. An example of this can be seen in the term *schick* in German, which is derived from the French *chic*.

As the term *chic* became increasingly accepted in the German language, its orthography shifted to the more German spelling *schick*. A much older example of this can be seen in the term *Fenster*, which is derived from the Latin *fenestra*.¹² Over time, this term has established itself in the German language to such an extent that many German speakers would not even recognize its foreign origins. Although many terms enter German as a direct loans, another important category of loan word assimilation is the loan translation; these terms are borrowed from a foreign language, but translated into German, examples include: *Maus* (tech.), *Fernseher*, *Sinn machen*, and *Haar-Trockener*. Some loan translations, often referred to as hybrids, are actually constructs of several foreign words, or a combination of foreign and native elements, e.g. *Großmutter*, *Lautsprecher*, and *Soundkarte*. Finally, there is a small but growing category of terms referred to in German as *Scheinentlehnungen*, or pseudo-loans. Pseudo-loans do not enter a language directly from the lexicon of another language, but rather appear to be based on lexical items from one language, which take on new and significantly different meanings when brought into another language. One of the most well known examples of this phenomenon in German can be seen in the term *Handy* (cell-phone), which does not originate from any obvious English term, yet nevertheless shows phonological and orthographical evidence of its English origins.¹³ The formation of pseudo-loans is of particular importance for the German language, as this phenomenon has become quite prevalent.

¹² “Fenster,” *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen*, 6th ed. (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003) 336.

¹³ One anecdotal etymological explanation for the origin of the term *Handy* in German is that it is derived from the English name for Motorola’s “Handie-Talkie”, a hand-held, two-way radio that became popular with radio enthusiasts following World War II. When later cellular telephones became available in Germany, these resembled the Motorola product, and thus were referred to as “Handys” by some. This name stuck, and cellular telephones have since been widely referred to as *Handys* in German.

As a result of a variety of factors, the German language has regularly undergone periods of heavy loan word assimilation. These periods, countered by periods of significant resistance to the influx of new lexical borrowings, occur throughout the recorded history of the German language. The historical exploration of this phenomenon will be the focus of the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3

LATIN, GREEK, AND GOTHIC AS SOURCES FOR ASSIMILATION

The history of German loan word assimilation is important to any study of its Modern-day incarnation. By tracing the history of lexical assimilation in German, one can hope to shed light on the factors that shape contemporary loan word assimilation. The earliest, indeed pre-historic period of lexical assimilation into the German language is undoubtedly lost in the obscurity of pre-literate northern and central Europe. As German tribal society began to settle into fixed geographic locales and to engage in trade with neighboring cultures, opportunities developed for the influx of new lexical items. In the case of Germanic tribes, this influx early on was composed primarily of Latin words, which entered proto-Germanic through contact with the Roman Empire. The majority of these terms entered the language as a result of the lack within the Germanic language itself of a suitable term to describe the ideas and goods arriving from neighboring groups to the Germanic tribes along with traders and religious missions. In contrast to the era of the Roman empire, the Germanic tribes of the 4th and 5th century were increasingly receptive to southern influences, leading to an increase in loan words entering into Germanic discourse, and leading ultimately to a profound effect on the budding Old High German language of what is now southern Germany, Austria and Switzerland. As a result of the burgeoning popularity of Christianity in the 7th and 8th centuries, the inflow of terms was often related to theological discourse. Indeed, receptiveness to the influx of foreign cultural influence can be seen to accompany every recorded period of heavy lexical assimilation in German, and is certainly one of the defining characteristics of this phenomenon.

With the influx of trade and Christianity from the south during the fifth century came many new terms and phonological conventions. These exerted their effect on what would later develop into Old High German.¹⁴ Among the sources that donated new vocabulary to the fledgling German language were Christian missionaries from the south. Chief among these were the Goths, who only a century before, had themselves been converted to Christianity by the Bishop Ulfila, a missionary of the Greek Christian church, who translated biblical scriptures from Greek into an artificial form of the language of the Goths, who had previously lacked a written language.

Unsurprisingly, the Gothic influence on early Germanic included a largely theological vocabulary of terms, which themselves were closely related to Greek. While some terms, such as Greek *kyrikón* (German *Kirche*) and *ángelos* (*Engel*) were taken directly from Greek through Gothic with only phonological changes, other Greek terms took a more complicated route to Germanic assimilation.¹⁵ Many terms had been translated into Gothic from Greek by Ulfila as he translated the Bible. These terms subsequently entered early German via the Gothic missionaries, as seen in the modern German terms *taufen* and *fasten*, which were derived from the Gothic *dáupjan* and *fastan* which themselves were direct loan translations of the Greek terms *baptízein* and *nêsteúein*.¹⁶ Loan translations such as these resulted from Ulfila's earlier translation of the Bible from Greek to Gothic, which were subsequently assimilated directly into the early German language without further translation. Ulfila's tendency to translate Greek theological terms into Gothic, rather than simply borrowing them directly, has had a profound impact on the German

¹⁴ Waterman, 68.

¹⁵ Waterman, 69.

¹⁶ Waterman, 69.

language's lexicon of terms relating to Christian theology, as much of it is derivative of Ulfila's work in translating Greek terminology into Gothic.

The arrival of the relatively new Christian religion in Germany occurred at roughly the same time that the period of tribal migrations in central Europe came to an end. By 496 C.E., these migrations had largely come to an end with the Frankish defeat of the Alemanni at Straßburg. The German tribes inhabited areas that had extensive contact with Vulgate Latin dialects, in some cases Germanic tribes supplanted earlier groups of Vulgate Latin speakers as the dominant group in regions of what is now Northern Italy. During this period, German acted as a dominant language and exerted an influence on the surrounding dialects.¹⁷ This influence was destined to be short-lived however, as the Germanic tribes adopted Christianity over the following two centuries, and fully integrated them-selves into the Roman culture of early Christianity.¹⁸ With this conversion to Christianity came the heavy linguistic influence of Latin on the German language. Latin became an influential language among the Germans, as the language of religion, written communication and scholarship. The domination of the Christian religion among the German tribes led to a massive influx of Latin loan items, which were quickly assimilated as a result of the lack of German equivalents.

The early period of German loan word assimilation can therefore be characterized by the influx of new ideas from the south; along with these ideas came a variety of technological items, which were undoubtedly new to the Germans. Through the assimilation of a foreign theology and culture from the south, the early West Germanic tribes were left with a language in need of a lexicon of terms to describe the goods and ideas which were flowing in. This led to the heavy assimilation of loan items from Latin, which already possessed a diverse lexicon of terms to

¹⁷ Waterman, 65.

¹⁸ Waterman, 65.

accompany the theology and technology that they brought to the German tribes. The state of loan word assimilation in Germany during the Christian expansion into northern and central Europe can therefore be seen as a period of cultural revolution, during which the native language lacked sufficient terms to define the inflow of new ideas and technology from the fledgling Christian civilization to their south. The Germanic tribes were slowly subsumed by Christianity in the form of the Roman church, and became a part of the Holy Roman Empire and of Christian civilization.

Along with the Roman church's conversion of the Germanic tribes came the written Latin language and alphabet, which in turn led to the ability to communicate across great distances by means of written correspondence. Although the early Germans had a writing system in the form of runic inscriptions, these were largely unfit for extensive communication, as they were typically carved into a variety of materials, such as wood, metal, stone or even bone. In the best of circumstances this was a heavily time-consuming process, thus discouraging extensive written communication between individuals by means of runic inscriptions.¹⁹ It is generally accepted that the runic script was used largely for the inscription of magic incantations and spells, as they were not suitable for the transcription of messages.²⁰ Therefore, the Latin script was a significant advance for the Germanic languages of the time, as it supplied them with a written means of communication. This advance, along with the advance of the Latin language itself as a means of communication, led to a period of significant loan word assimilation in German, and supplied many terms still in use in the German language today.

Whereas proto-Germanic lacked an efficient means of written communication, the Latin

¹⁹ Waterman, 42.

²⁰ Randolph Quirk and C.L. Wrenn, *An Old English Grammar* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994) 7.

script was well developed as a medium for extensive written communication long before the conversion of Rome to Christianity. The language was widely spoken among the Christian elite, making long distance correspondence easier. Codices were written in Latin, allowing for the dissemination of ideas in written form, and making these manuscripts in effect one of the earliest forms of mass communication in Europe. As a consequence of the domination of Latin as a means for the dissemination of ideas, Latin quickly became an important language for the developing German upper class. Throughout the Old High German period, most religious and legal matters were communicated through the Latin language and writing system. This led in turn to the heavy reliance by elite members of society on Latin, and encouraged the incorporation of Latin terms into the developing Old High German language.

The earliest period of recorded Germanic loan word assimilation was dominated by Christianity. Religion played a significant role in the formation of the Germanic language during the first millennium of the Common Era largely because it served as a means for the diffusion of loan items from Latin and Greek into the Germanic languages. The newly arrived Christian religion required a suitable lexicon of ideas with which to express itself, which led to a heavy reliance on both assimilated terms from Latin and Greek, as well as terms directly translated into German.

In addition to the need for terms to describe Christian mysticism, the developing German language was inundated by new technology from the south, which hitherto lacked fitting descriptors in the German language. Many items that were common to Roman culture were relatively unknown when they were first brought into contact with Germanic tribes. Such items, lacking a suitable German term became known by their Latin name. Terms such as *fenestra* (German *Fenster*), *camera* (*Kammer*), and *vinum* (*Wein*), along with many other Latin terms

entered the German language in this manner, and have since become so deeply ingrained in the German language that they are indistinguishable to most German speakers from originally German lexical items.

A similar phenomenon can be seen in modern German's reliance on English loan items for the description of recently developed technology. Contemporary English has become analogous to Latin in its role as a contributor of lexical items to the German language in modern society. American culture has become pervasive in German-speaking areas, and has led to a period of heavy linguistic borrowing from English, which parallels the role of Latin language and culture during the early years of Germanic conversion to Christianity. However, the pervasiveness of literacy among modern German speakers, as well as the increased prevalence of media communication in modern German society differs from the Latin era of linguistic dominance, and has increased the speed at which new terms are assimilated at all levels of German society. Whereas Latin exerted pressure on the German language over a period of close to one and a half millennia, English has only existed as a primary source of loan words in German for a period of a little over fifty years, yet the effect English has had on German at all levels of society rivals that of Latin, despite the short time frame. During its time as a dominant source of loan words for German, Latin brought with it a new writing system, monotheistic religion, and many cultural differences that were largely assimilated by the Germanic tribes in their conversion to Roman Christianity. These changes affected the German language and culture profoundly, and led to massive changes at all levels of Germanic society. The role of religion in the assimilation of Latin language and culture by German society is extremely important, and distinguishes this period of lexical assimilation from other periods in the history of the German language.

CHAPTER 4

SECULAR SOURCES FOR GERMAN LOAN WORD ASSIMILATION

Historically, the German language has not been limited to religious sources for lexical borrowings. New ideas and goods from foreign cultures were steadily imported into the German-speaking world following its conversion to Christianity. As a result of their novelty, these ideas and goods were most often referred to by their foreign descriptor, as the German language itself lacked suitable terms to describe these items. New literary movements, such as courtly literature from the French, and the rediscovery of secular Latin literature by the Humanists led to the assimilation of many new terms from these languages, some of which passed out of the language as the popularity of genres waned, yet some terms remained even after the literary genres that brought these terms into the German language had disappeared from popular culture. In addition to literary sources for loan words, there have been other avenues for foreign terminology to enter the German language; commerce, the linguistic elitism of the nobility, and the development of new forms of technology all played important roles in the importation of foreign terms into the German language.

Even after the initial period of Christian/Latin influence on the German language, Latin continued to exert a strong influence on the German lexicon. Throughout the early New High German period, Latin exerted a significant influence on the German language. As a result of the reliance of the Catholic Church on Latin for the celebration of all liturgical rites, as well as for all written correspondence and documentation, Latin maintained a strong presence in the German world until well after the Protestant Reformation. The Renaissance, with its resurgence in

interest for Humanism and classical literature were also influential in the popularity of Latin loan words during the early New High German period.²¹ The rediscovery of the authors of classical Roman antiquity led to an increase in the adoption of secular terms from Latin. The reasons for the adoption of these terms are varied, however one of the most important underlying factors leading to the adoption of secular Latin terms was the fact that many of the ideas expressed in secular Latin literature and philosophy were not native to German culture, and thus had been previously unnecessary to the German lexicon of most speakers. The influx of new terms from secular Latin, coupled with the vast vocabulary related to church liturgy, exerted a tremendous influence on the German language.

The influence of Latin, as both a secular and religious language has undoubtedly been the most formative influence on the German language throughout history. Even today, the level to which English terms have been assimilated into the German language does not compare with the influence Latin has exerted on all European languages, including German. Whereas the majority of English influence on German has lasted for less than a century, Latin shaped German from very early on in its development, and continued to be influential for more than a millennium. Latin existed as a language of spirituality and scholarship for much of its history in German, which greatly contributed to its influence. Although the English language has begun to take on many of the characteristics of Latin, i.e. as a language of scholarship and international commerce, its influence as a source for assimilation will most likely never match that of Latin. This stems largely from the fact that Latin exerted its influence on German early on in its development as a language, providing a wealth of lexical items which were previously unnecessary to the speakers of Proto-Germanic. Complex philosophy and theology were first

²¹ Waterman, 120.

expressed in German as a by-product of influence with Latin language and culture. Whereas early Germanic culture was at a relative primitive stage in its development in comparison with the Christian culture which it embraced, contemporary American and German culture are not disparate in their levels of technological or philosophical advancement. Indeed, the globalization of society today has leveled the playing field for world cultures to a large extent, and influence on a par with that which Latin exerted on its neighbors is no longer possible.

In addition to the effect of Christianity on German early on, the German language underwent considerable change as a result of the linguistic influence of the nobility. Up until the beginning of the 20th century, members of the German nobility exercised extensive influence on the development of the German lexicon. This was due in large part to their high position in society, coupled with a relatively high level of literacy and bilingualism in comparison with the lower classes. From very early on in the development of German society, the courts of Germany imported lexical items from other languages through literature. French literature in particular was actively imported and emulated by the German nobility from around 1170 until 1300 in the *Minnesang* genre.²² This style of poetry was inspired by the works of French *troubadours*, and was largely composed by members of the nobility. The German poets who engaged in this style borrowed both thematically and lexically from the French, and were responsible for the heavy assimilation of lexical items from French, which related to courtly life. The absence of native German terms to describe the chivalric way of life led to the assimilation of suitable terms from French. Although many of the terms borrowed by medieval poets in the composition of these works fell out of use as the popularity of the art-form declined, the popularity of the French language as a source of prestige terminology survived nearly 600 years. This predilection for

²² Eckehard Simon, "Phantom Ladies", *A New History of German Literature*, ed. David E. Wellberry, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004) 55.

French courtly romance during the late medieval era, as well as later political dominance by the French during the early modern and baroque eras led to a high level of loan word assimilation. Although many of these terms fell into disuse as the literary influence of courtly literature waned, some of these terms maintained their presence in the German language well into modernity.²³ The French language, like Latin, has exerted a lasting effect on the German language, and has shaped its modern linguistic identity.

The French language attained prestige status in Germany during the Middle High German era, which in turn led to the high esteem placed on borrowings from French in German society. Towards the end of the Middle High German period, it had become common for German nobles to hire French tutors for their children, and for German knights to seek work at French courts.²⁴ The French language continued to exercise its influence on the German courts until the dissolution of the German nobility's prominence at the conclusion of World War I. Particularly, from the late 16th century until the end of the 18th century, French exerted a strong influence on the German language through the nobility and bourgeoisie. As German nationalism strengthened during the nineteenth century, this influence declined but still remained important. Throughout this long period, French maintained a high status among the elite, which led to the heavy use of French terminology in German discourse. This was no doubt aided by the popularity of French/German bilingualism among the aristocracy, which remained strong throughout this period. The social prominence of the nobility allowed loan items adopted by the nobility to slowly make their way into the lexicon of the rest of society.

Although the nobility exerted an extensive amount of influence on the German language's assimilation of terms from French, it should be noted that nobility was not alone in its

²³ M. O'C. Walshe, *A Middle High German Reader* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974) 4.

²⁴ Waterman, 89.

importation of loan items from foreign languages. At all levels of society, assimilation occurred to a significant extent. Particularly within the *Bildungsbürgertum*, loan word assimilation was prevalent, and stemmed from sources such as commerce and trade, literature and bilingualism.

In addition to the popularity of the French language as a source of loan items, Italian also exerted a certain amount of influence on the development of the German lexicon. This was due in large part to the economic power of Italy as a nexus for imports from Asia and the Middle-East. Many loan items also made their way into German via Italian from the Middle East.²⁵ These terms related largely to goods, which either originated in the Middle East, or reached Europe through trade with merchants there. Additionally, terms which themselves describe trade and commerce made their way into the German language as borrowings from Italian during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²⁶ Terms relating to commerce such as *Bank*, *Kredit*, *Konto* and *Kassa* all entered the German language from Italian.

The importance of commerce and trade as sources for lexical assimilation is significant in contemporary German as well. Modern German often makes use of loan terms and loan translations from English as a source for new terminology to describe new ideas and technology. In the area of technology and computing, many terms have made their way into German from English as loan translations as well as direct borrowings:

<u>Native English</u>	<u>German</u>
Computer	Computer
Hard-disk drive	Festplatte
Mouse	Maus
Mouse pad	Mauspad

²⁵ Waterman, 122.

²⁶ Waterman, 123.

Software	Software
Memory	Speicher
Sound card	Soundkarte
Window	Fenster
Assembly language	Assemblersprache
Compact Disc	CD
DVD player	DVD Spieler
cut	ausschneiden
copy	kopieren

The reliance on English loan terms by the German language for the description of new technology mirrors earlier eras in German history, in which the German language relied on foreign languages for terminology to describe novel ideas and developments in technology. Interestingly, modern German often makes use of hybrids of English and German in their borrowings from English. Quite often, this occurs where the German cognate of an English term is nearly identical to the English equivalent, as in the case of *Soundkarte* or *Assemblersprache*. The close linguistic relatedness between English and German on a historic level explains this phenomenon to some extent, and may also explain the popularity of English as a source for loan items. Many terms can be easily integrated into German with a high level of comprehensibility, as a result of the close interrelatedness of the two languages' lexicons.

In addition to Italian's important influence on German vocabulary relating to trade, Italian also exercised a great amount of influence on musical terminology in German. The importance of the Italian language on the European vocabulary of music is extensive, and this influence is widespread in German. Musical tempos in German are expressed using Italian

borrowings, such as *adagio*, *pesante*, *allegro*, etc. Stringed instruments are often referred to by their Italian names rather than the German equivalent, as seen in the borrowing *Violine* from the Italian *Violino*, despite the suitable German term *Geige*. Voice types are also referred to by Italian loan words, e.g. *Soprano*, *Mezzo-soprano*, *Tenor*, etc. The influence of the Italian language on German musical terminology is related largely to the popularity of Italian composers and compositional styles. The music of Italy was imported north into German-speaking parts of Europe both by the composers themselves and as copies of the sheet music of compositions. Sheet music was often left untranslated when it was imported north, and thus the Italian terminology was assimilated by German musicians who found it necessary to understand adequate Italian to understand the instructions found on sheet music. This tendency to make tempo and stylistic instructions in Italian on sheet music is still present in modern sheet music, as this terminology has become an international convention, transcending language barriers.

The predominance of Italian in the sphere of music is by no means distinctive of the German language. Throughout Europe, and today world-wide, these musical terms have established themselves as a common musical lexicon understood by all musicians, regardless of their native language. Italian terminology sets a lexical standard in music, similar to that of English in many other fields today, where English has become a medium in which diverse groups of people can discuss the technical aspects of their work in a common language.

CHAPTER 5

MODERN-DAY GERMAN AND THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH

English today has attained the status of a global language. More than any other language, English exerts an influence on a global scale that has never been rivaled throughout the history of civilization. English has intermingled with countless other languages, and as a consequence has exerted an unprecedented amount of influence on world language as a whole.²⁷ More than one billion people speak English as either their native language, or as a second or foreign language.²⁸ With a world population of roughly six billion as of 2007, English is spoken at some level of fluency by nearly one sixth of the human-race. The unprecedented influence English enjoys as the *lingua franca* of the third millennium has been felt very strongly in the German-speaking world, where the confluence of a socially receptive, bilingual society and the economic power of the United States following World War II have led to a high level of loan word assimilation. Since the 1930's, the English language has been actively promoted as a means of international communication by the governments of Great Britain and the United States. Beginning with the foundation of British Council in 1934, Great Britain sought to increase the worldwide prestige of English through the promotion of English language education in the developing world.²⁹ The purpose of this endeavor was to increase the exposure of foreign cultures to British culture through English-language education. ESL teachers were trained at the British government's

²⁷ Kachru, 195.

²⁸ Kinga Nettmann-Multanowska, *English Loan words in Polish and German after 1945: Orthography and Morphology*, Bamberger Beiträge zur Englischen Sprachwissenschaft Band 45, (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2003) 2.

²⁹ Nettmann-Multanowska, 5.

expense, and the worldwide broadcast of English radio programming through the British Broadcasting Corporation was financed as a means of propagating British culture worldwide. Little more than a decade after the formation of the British council, the United States replicated the British promotion of the English language through a variety of programs designed to increase the presence of American culture abroad. Organizations such as the Fulbright Commission (founded in 1946), the Peace Corps (1961), Voice of America (1942) and the United States Information Agency (1953) served to increase global exposure to “American Values” and disseminate the English language throughout the world.

This active marketing of a language abroad has greatly contributed to the popularity of English on a global scale. The active promotion of language as an end in itself is an extremely modern phenomenon, which does not appear to have significant historical precedent. Although the reasons for this phenomenon are many, it can hardly be overlooked that this peddling of English to other cultures has served as a tool for cultural supremacy world-wide. Never before has a language been conscientiously promoted as a tool for cultural supremacy; the effect of this has been monumental world-wide.³⁰ Unlike earlier trends in which a language achieved a high level of social predominance in foreign cultures by indirect and mostly unintentional means, the English language today, as a tool of American global diplomacy, is in active use as a means to encourage globalization as well as general good-will towards the United States and its interests abroad.

The means by which the United States has been able to exert this influence go back largely to the conclusion of the Second World War, and the United States’ status as a global super-power in a world no longer dominated by European powers. The political and economic

³⁰ See pages 5 and 6, for statistical information regarding the use of English worldwide.

turmoil that embroiled Europe following the Second World War created a power vacuum that was immediately filled by the United States and the Soviet Union following the collapse of central Europe at the conclusion of hostilities in the European theatre of World War II. Soon after the conclusion of the Second World War, the uneasy alliance between the United States and Soviet Union began to fray, and both countries competed for influence in Europe and the developing world. Organizations such as the Peace Corps in the United States served to promote American values abroad, and actively fostered English language programs world-wide. As a result of this competition for global influence between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., the United States actively promoted the English language and American values in Western Europe, which resulted in an unprecedented level of influence in Europe. This influence was felt particularly in West Germany, whose location at the border between east and west ensured its position as a focal point for pro-western propaganda throughout the Cold War. In addition, this influence was particularly strong in the German-speaking areas of Europe as a result of the severely weakened economic and political status of Germany and Austria at the conclusion of World War II. American popular culture filled the void left in the wake of the fall of German nationalism in West Germany and Austria.

The active role taken by the United States in supplanting earlier nationalist sentiment in Germany and Austria with pro-western, i.e. pro-American sentiment was aided by the social void created by the fall of National-Socialism. Kinga Nettman-Multanowska claims that American popular culture has become America's largest export:

...it is undeniable that mass/pop culture is the USA's major export product. Today, after mass culture has become in a sense 'people's religion', America is the chief animator of

world spirituality, as if to support the claim that “... Mit dem Cheeseburger kommt die Sprache”.³¹

The concept of the English language as an exportable commodity has become increasingly concrete over the past fifty years. The economic strength of American companies abroad in the latter half of the 20th century aided the popularity of English in non-English speaking countries. Companies such as McDonalds, Coca Cola, Microsoft, and others have greatly increased the appeal of American products, and in the process the English language. English in the latter half of the twentieth century attained a prestige status worldwide, similar to that of French and Latin throughout Europe during previous eras.

The German-speaking population of Europe has reacted to this rise in the prestige of a foreign language in a manner similar to that of previous eras. The perceived prestige status of English has created a culture in which businesses actively utilize English in marketing slogans, and English terms are used to describe a wide variety of everyday objects, even when an alternate native German term exists. For some, such as the Verein Deutsche Sprache, this is viewed as a crisis. According to their website:

Die deutsche Sprache wird zur Zeit von einer Unzahl unnötiger und unschöner englischer Ausdrücke überflutet. Die Werbung bietet hits for kids oder Joghurt mit weekend feeling. Im Fernsehen gibt es den Kiddie Contest, History, Adventure oder History Specials und im Radio Romantic Dreams. Wir stählen unseren Körper mit body shaping und power walking. Wir kleiden uns in outdoor jackets, tops oder beach wear. Wir schmieren uns

³¹ Nettmann-Multanowska 6.

anti-ageing-Creme ins Gesicht oder sprühen styling ins Haar. Bei der Bahn mit ihren tickets, dem service point und McClean verstehen wir nur Bahnhof.³²

The VDS mirrors earlier groups opposed to the disproportionate influence of French on the German language. One of the earliest of these groups, known as the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* was founded by Martin Opitz in 1617 to counteract the lack of esteem with which the German language was held by the upper class of Germany at the time.³³ Opitz felt, much like the VDS feels today, that German itself could be a prestige language, and did not need to rely on French and Latin for literary and poetic expression. To this end, Opitz translated Italian sonnets of Petrarch into German, and attempted to create a sense of the poetic in German, which he apparently found lacking. Although the modern-day VDS is less concerned with poetry and literature than it is with American consumerism and pop culture, the underlying fear of linguistic domination by an outside power remains the same. Roland Duhamel, a member of the Belgian chapter of the VDS goes so far as to claim that “Englisch als erste Fremdsprache müßte europaweit verboten werden”.³⁴ Such a statement implies an intense distrust of English, which transcends a simple preference for German terminology in place of English loan words. Whether this fear that English will one day supplant the languages of Europe is rational or irrational, remains to be seen. It can be observed however, that French did not replace German as a literary language during the 17th and 18th centuries, despite the fears of many to the contrary, and that languages regularly import terminology from other languages, without losing their distinctiveness.

³² Verein Deutsche Sprache e.V., ed. Thilo Machotta and Matthias Cornelius, 6 December 2005, 27 May 2006 <http://vds-ev.de/index.php>.

³³ Waterman, 140.

³⁴ Verein Deutsche Sprache e.V., ed. Thilo Machotta and Matthias Cornelius, 6 December 2005, 27 May 2006 <http://vds-ev.de/index.php>.

Lexical assimilations are used in a wide variety of settings in German discourse, yet certain settings appear to have a higher threshold for loan word usage than others. In earlier periods of history, German speakers often turned to lexical borrowings as a source of prestige vocabulary, or to describe a concept or object for which they lacked a suitable German term in their personal lexicon. Today, similar reasons exist for the use of loan words in discourse, however several other factors have become apparent. Chief among these is the popularity of mass media, and its reliance on advertisements, many of which make use of English terms to increase the perceived chic-ness of their product. This capitalization on the perceived prestige of English loan substitutions for German terms in advertisements is a novel trend, which is a byproduct of modern society's fetish for consumerism. The following list, taken from the German Wikipedia's "Liste von Anglizismen" shows a selection of the wide variety of English terms that have been assimilated by German in order to increase the perceived prestige of the items as consumer product.³⁵ The list was taken from the German Wikipedia as it represents user contributed examples of Anglicisms, and thus it is indicative of terms that are in common use by native German speakers.

Airconditioner	Airbag
Airline	Bike
Bluff	Bodyguard
etwas checken	Clown
Coach	Couch
Cornflakes	Cockpit
Cool	Countdown

³⁵ "Anglizismen," *Wikipedia*, 17 March 2007, 17 May 2007
<<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglizismus>>.

Fast Food	Flashback
Hotdog	high (intoxicated)
In-ear-headphones	Kids
Keyboard	Link
Liveübertragung	Make-up
Meeting	scannen
Sweatshirt	shoppen
Underground	XL, XS, XXL

For each of the above terms, a suitable German term exists, which has been supplanted to some extent in advertising with its English cognate. For many of these items, the related German term is significantly older and more established in the German lexicon, yet the English term is perceived as a more prestigious and desirable descriptor of the object or idea being described by many individuals, and therefore it is more likely to appear in advertising, despite its relative novelty and the likelihood that it will not be as easily comprehended by all German consumers. The likelihood that these terms will not be easily understood by non-English speaking members of German society may add to their prestige value, in that they create a sense of elitism for those who can easily decipher their meaning.

Another area where the German language demonstrates a high prevalence of loan words exists in the jargon of the German youth. For most German school children, the English language has become the first language they are exposed to in a structured, foreign-language course. This has led to a high level of English fluency among young people in Germany, which in turn has increased the amount of English lexical assimilation. Because the vast majority of Germans born in recent decades speak English to at least a basic level of competency, the ease with which

terminology from English enters the personal lexicon of young Germans is greatly increased. Many terms that have entered the German language via *Jugendsprache* are terms that relate to American youth culture itself; in addition, American profanity has entered German *Jugendsprache* to a high degree as seen in the English terms ‘shit’ and ‘fuck’ both of which have become quite common in German youth discourse. Indeed, in the case of the term ‘fuck’ German composites such as the participial adjective *abgefickt* have demonstrated a high level of linguistic dynamicism in the use of English profanity. This term, related to the colloquial German ‘*abgefickt*’ demonstrates a strong willingness on the part of certain German speakers to utilize English profanity as a substitute for German profanity in a manner that parallels German usage. It is quite likely that profane terms entered the German lexicon from American films, which tend to use ‘shit’ and ‘fuck’ as exclamations of dismay, rather than their verbal meanings. Indeed, as a result of the stigma placed on sex in American society, the term ‘fuck’ is rarely heard in its verbal meaning in movies, whereas it has become quite common as an expression of dismay in R-rated films. The likelihood that German speakers acquire English profanity through movies is evidenced by the tendency in German for speakers to use them as exclamations, which mirror their English use in similar situations in movies. This phenomenon may also be linked to the inability of some members of the older generations of German speakers to understand the meaning of these English terms, allowing the use of such terms with impunity even in situations where older people might take offense at their use, if they could understand the terms’ meanings.

During the Cold War era, the popularity of English within youth culture was further strengthened by the prevalence of American pop culture in West Germany and Austria. American television programs, magazines, consumer products and music were all readily available outside the GDR; the presence of these products led to what has been termed

“americanmania”, a phenomenon greatly helped by the presence of English-speaking military bases in two of the four German occupation zones following the Second World War.³⁶ The impact of this near constant exposure to English could be felt to a great extent in the transference of loan items from English at all levels of society, but particularly among the West German youth.

American marketing slogans have also had a significant impact on the German language. Marketing slogans such as Sony’s slogan “It’s not a Trick, it’s a Sony!” or T-Mobile’s “For a Better World For You” are virtually devoid of real meaning, yet the perception among German speakers that English slogans are prestigious has allowed such marketing ploys to become successful and popular. In a culture surrounded by slogans of this sort, it is unsurprising that German speakers feel pressured to incorporate English terms into their everyday speech. In some cases, the use of English in a slogan backfires, as in the case of the 2004 Douglas slogan: “Come In and Find Out”, which was interpreted by many German speakers as “Kommen Sie herein, und finden Sie sich hinaus”. Other slogans, such as the McDonalds slogan “Ich liebe es”, is a direct translation of the American English marketing campaign “I’m loving it”, yet in its translation into German, the progressive meaning of the English original is completely lost, and one is left with a mental image of a person in love with a cheeseburger.

The use of English in marketing campaigns has been at least partially a result of companies that have chosen to have one worldwide campaign slogan. These companies, which are often not even American or English companies themselves, choose English slogans for the worldwide intelligibility and for the prestige status that English has among certain demographics. Demographic groups that have shown a strong predilection for American terminology include

³⁶ Nettmann-Multanowska, 45.

the fashion industry, popular youth culture, the areas of finance and trade, and marketing. In Germany, the use of English terms in the slogans of businesses has been particularly effective, as evidenced by the high level of English slogan adoption by German companies.

The Internet has also served as a medium for the transference of English terms into German. The vast majority of websites online today are written in English in order to increase their intercultural intelligibility. This means that German speakers, who want to fully use the Internet, will be forced at times to rely on their English skills to interpret web-pages, and to navigate the Internet effectively. Terminology relating to the Internet has been largely English based, as a result of the Internet's American origin. As a consequence, this terminology has made its way into the German technical lexicon relating to the Internet. The programming languages underlying the Internet, such as html and java, are based on English, and require a high level of English competence in order for a programmer to use them effectively. All of this has led to the incorporation of English Internet jargon into the German language; making the Internet another avenue by which modern English enters German.

The role of English throughout the latter half of the twentieth century has been one of global preeminence. For fifty years, English has served as a vehicle for the assimilation of lexical items related to American culture, terminology and products. Particularly in Germany, this phenomenon has been extensive. As Germany recovers from the weakened sense of self that plagued it following the Second World War, and a new sense of national pride develops, it is likely that Germany will increasingly resist the influx of new English terms. At the moment, and stems from a variety of factors, not the least of which has been the United States' diplomatic blunders internationally in the years following the events of September 11, it would appear that the popularity of the United States internationally is on the decline. It remains to be seen whether

this decline in popularity will influence the decline of English as a source for lexical assimilation. It is quite possible that the English language, in its role as a global language is no longer dependent on the United States for its popularity. It may have reached a point of critical mass, where the sheer number of individuals who speak English world-wide will help English to remain the pre-eminent language globally despite the potential decline of the United States on the world stage. If the English language maintains its popularity as a global lingua franca, much like Latin did for 1500 years following the fall of the Roman empire, it is likely that the English language will continue to have an impact on world languages, including German.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Throughout its history, the German language has demonstrated a predilection for the assimilation of loan words from foreign lexicons. During various periods, certain languages, such as Latin, French, Italian and English, have provided German with significant numbers of new lexical borrowings. Certain characteristics in German society appear to accompany periods in which loan word assimilation is popular. Among these are a weakened nationalist sentiment, the societal predominance of another nation's culture, and the economic domination of a foreign power. During periods in which these qualities are not present in German society, significant resistance to the assimilation of loan words arises in the German-speaking world. Particularly within the academic and political spheres, periods of German national strength correspond to periods of strong language purism.

The historical phenomenon of lexical assimilation in German differs from the modern phenomenon in that the modern-day phenomenon of loan word assimilation is a result of several factors. The modern phenomenon of lexical assimilation is driven by the technological revolution that has reshaped global society. Through this revolution, new forms of media have arisen, and communication at all levels of society has increased by a staggering amount. The rise of new forms of media has created heightened interconnectedness between people in different cultures, allowing for example, events in the United States to have an almost instantaneous impact on German society 5000 miles away. The speed with which people communicate in modern society allows for the assimilation of new terms from other languages at a pace that would have been unimaginable in earlier periods of loan word assimilation in the German-

speaking world. In addition to the affect new communications technologies have had on the assimilation of lexical borrowings in German, the globalization of commerce and trade has allowed for a heightened influx of assimilated loan words into German, particularly from English. The status of the United States as a global superpower during the latter half of the twentieth century has also contributed to the modern phenomenon of lexical assimilation in the German-speaking world.

The interconnectedness of modern-day society worldwide has greatly contributed to the prevalence of English loan word assimilation in German. Additional circumstances, such as the strong role the United States played in the rebuilding of Germany under the Marshall Plan following World War II, as well as the international popularity of American popular culture have increased the role of English in the German language. Although the popularity of English borrowings in German has alarmed many language purists in the German-speaking world, the history of the German language belies claims by some that German will soon become nothing more than *Denglisch*, i.e. a language based almost entirely on English lexicon, with only a passing similarity to the German of pre-English influence.

Historically, German has often incorporated terminology from other languages into its lexicon. This is a result of many factors, including its geographical location at the crossroads of Europe, and the tendency for German to assimilate terminology from foreign languages rather than coin new terms for new technology and ideas. Thus, the predilection of German for the assimilation of lexical items from foreign language is one of German's defining features. Like all living languages; the German language is dynamic, like all languages that do not exist in a vacuum, German interacts with the languages with which it comes into contact and develops in new directions through the borrowing of lexical items. Germans no longer view terms derived

from Latin as foreign, even though such terms make up a significant portion of the modern German lexicon, and thus at one time “distorted” the German language with their presence. In the same way, any effect the English language has on German is a purely natural phenomenon, which the German language will, no doubt, survive.

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