"Bakavilisi Biga" — "We Can 'Turn' the Language" — Or: What Happens to English Words in Kilivila Language?

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1. English Words in Kilivila Language

Kilivila is an Austronesian Language with VOS-word-order that is spoken by the inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands in Papua New Guinea (Senft: 1986). Since the independence of Papua New Guinea in 1975, the influence *of* English — the national language of PNG — has been gradually increasing. This paper, based on 15 months of field research, attempts to demonstrate what happens to English words that are incorporated into the Kilivila lexicon as loan-words. Moreover, the paper will also discuss the question, why Kilivila speakers incorporate English words as loan-words in their language at all.

2. What Happens to English Words in **Kilivila Language?**

Kilivila native speakers have borrowed a variety of English words. These borrowings include color-terms (see Senft: 1987). proper names (see Weinreich: 1953, 52), numerals, and a variety of other words that will be discussed more in detail here. However, before discussing these other loan-words, it must be emphasized that the increasing importance of a money economy on the islands is responsible for the fact that the Kilivila numerals are in real

danger *of* being replaced by English numerals. These numerals are borrowed in such a way that they agree with the inherent segmental constraints in Kilivila word formation.

As to the other loan-words, I found 143 loan-words proper, 6 loan translations, and 6 cases of loan-words that remain unclear so far.

The 143 loan-words proper encompass 113 nouns, two nominal expressions, 22 verb stems, two adjectives, one adverb, and three interjections. With only four loan-words we find a change in meaning in comparison to the respective English word (e.g.: *memba = group* (not: **member)),* and with 6 loan-words only we note a broadening in the semantic concept in comparison to the respective English word (e.g.: *turaki = truck* and *car).* All loan-words are grammatically integrated into the Kilivila inflectional morphology system. But what about the other mechanisms of interference that can be observed with these loan-words?

If we compare the loan-words with the phonetic transcription of the English words as represented in Jones (1969), we can formulate very simple transformation rules to describe the phonemic changes the English lexical entries undergo in the process of being borrowed by Kilivila speakers. Here we find 30 deletion transformations, 135 adjunction transformations, and 152 substitution transformations. Only four words *(medisin, minit, -spidi, taint)* are borrowed without any change whatsoever. The majority of the transformations can be explained by the inherent rules of Kilivila syllable patterns (Senft: 1986, 20ff.)

As to the structure of the final syllable of the loan-words we can summarize the following results: Almost all English words that end with a vowel, end with the same vowel in Kilivila when borrowed (e.g.: *mani);* almost all English words that end with *[s]* are borrowed in such a way that their final vowel is [a] (e.g.: *pauda* (= *powder)).* With the exception of 10 words that end with a closed syllable which does not agree with the canonical syllable patterns proper of Kilivila, all the other loan-words (= 93%) end with a final syllable which agrees with one of the five Kilivila syllable patterns proper.

If we look at the English word first and then at the Kilivila loan-word, we can speculate that with a few loan-words there may be some influence of English orthography and that with some loan-words the final vowel depends on the vowel within the stressed syllable of the English word borrowed. However, the final sound of the English word seems to have a describable influence on the final vowel of the Kilivila loan-word; thus we can formulate rules of the following type:

— If the final sound of the English word is [k], the final vowel of the Kilivila loan word is *'if* (e.g.: *buki, pikiniki* etc.).

— If the final sound of the English word is [n] or [ŋ], and if [n, [ŋ] are not preceded by (lɔ, ɬiː], the final vowel of the Kilivila loan word is /i/ (e.g.: *ayani* (= *iron)* etc.); if [n] is preceded by {lɔ] the final vowel of the Kilivila loan-word is /a/ (e.g.: *malena* (= *melon);* if [n] is preceded by [liː] the syllable becomes a closed syllable that ends with [m] (e.g.: *-kilinim-* (= *(to) clean).*

With 12 rules of this type — that will be formulated in detail elsewhere — we can describe the final vowel (adjunction transformations) for 90 loan words.

If we look at the Kilivila loan-word only — with respect to the word final vowels —, we can formulate rules of the following type: We describe the last two syllables of the Kilivila loan-word as: ... $C_1 V_1 $C_2 V_2$ ($ = syllable boundary, C = consonant. V = vowel): the rules then run:

V_2 = /i/ if C_2 = /k/ (e.g.: *buki. tobaki, turaki* etc.).

V_2 = /a/ if C_1 = /b, l/, V_1 = /e, a, u/, C_2 = /t/ (e.g.: *beleta, buta, pailata, sabata).*

With 27 rules of this type we can describe the final vowel (adjunction transformations) for

95 loan-words. For the present, it must remain unresolved, whether these two approaches result in rules and regulations that interact with each other.

The strategy to transfer a word in such a form that it resembles a potential or actual word in Kilivila as the recipient language (Weinreich: 1953, 48) is also responsible for the adjunction of phonemes within English words that are borrowed as loan-words. However, with a few loan-words we also find syllables with consonant clusters that neither agree with Kilivila phonotactics nor with Kilivila syllable patterns proper.

As to the deletion and substitution transformations that can be observed in the process of borrowing English words as loan-words, we find the following strategy, already formulated by Dutton (1982. 186): ". . . speakers have no difficulty with sounds that occur in their own languages . . . but interpret unusual sounds in terms of their 'nearest perceived' sound in their own language". Thus, English [h] is usually deleted. English [ʃ] and [d3] may become /s/, [ɔ] may become /o/, [eɪ] may become /e/, [æ] may become /a/, [v] may become /b/, etc.

With the exception of a few lexical entries the process of borrowing English words as loan-words seems to be relatively strongly rule governed. Although most loan words are borrowed in such a way that they fit the segmental paradigm of Kilivila, the borrowing of loan-words leads to phonotactic and syllable patterns that do not agree with the canonical Kilivila patterns. Thus, the mechanisms of interference observed will most probably have some consequences for Kilivila language change in progress.

As to the loan translations and unclear cases of loan-words, one example each will be given. In Kilivila, *radio* is translated as *kwegilagela* — which literally translates as *a thing that makes noise.* Why the Kilivila term *diyapani* refers both to *the Japanese* and to *water-bottle* remains unclear. The extension of the semantic concept may be due to the Trobrianders' World War II experiences.

Now what are the causes of interference here? Besides the causes of lexical innovation listed in Weinreich (1953, 56 ff.) we must emphasize the following facts with respect to the Kilivila situation:

— religion and (socio-) economy are the important factors in the culture contact situation

   on the Trobriands that lead to interference processes within the language:
— prestige is accredited to the usage of loan-words in Kilivila;
— marginal natives and other persons employ the use of loan-words as a linguistic means to advance in their social position; the group of people having employed this strategy most effectively consists of the local village priests;
— the traditional elite attempts to preserve the political and social status quo ante by employing the same verbal means as the group of social climbers;
— the PNG government promotes alphabetization campaigns; with the gradually growing group of school children. English loan-words are more incorporated into the Kilvila lexicon: here especially the girls seem to be the promotors of this development.

References

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