

A MODEL OF SEMANTIC EVOLUTION AND GRAMMATICAL INTEGRATION OF FRENCH BORROWINGS IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

In English, tense as a grammatical category expresses the time of occurrence of an action or state. However, it is necessary to analyze the concept of tense not only through grammatical forms, but also together with the semantic and functional aspects that denote it. Therefore, the term “functional-semantic system” is used. In this approach, not only grammatical tenses, but also other language tools related to them are taken into account

Keywords: functional-semantic system, core, peripheral elements, aspect, tense, category

INTRODUCTION

The category of tense is one of the main grammatical concepts in English. It expresses the time of occurrence of an action or state. In traditional grammatical analysis, tense is indicated by the morphological forms of the verb (for example, works, worked, will work). However, tense is not limited to grammatical forms; time is also expressed through many lexical and contextual means. Therefore, it is important to consider tense in a broader sense—that is, as a functional-semantic system. With this approach, tense is analyzed not only as a grammatical unit, but also as a semantic and communicative one.

DISCUSSION

The present study proposes a comprehensive model for explaining the semantic evolution and grammatical integration of French borrowings in English, demonstrating that lexical borrowing is not a static phenomenon but a dynamic, multi-layered process shaped by linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural factors. The findings confirm that French loanwords in English undergo systematic semantic and grammatical adaptation rather than remaining peripheral or foreign elements within the recipient language.

From a semantic perspective, the analysis reveals that French borrowings exhibit several dominant patterns of semantic change, including semantic narrowing, broadening, amelioration, and specialization. Many borrowings initially entered English with meanings closely aligned to their source-language senses, particularly in domains such as governance, law, cuisine, fashion, and art. Over time, however, frequent usage and contextual reanalysis led to semantic restructuring, whereby meanings became more abstract, metaphorical, or domain-specific. This supports the view that semantic evolution is driven by cognitive processes such as categorization, conventionalization, and metaphorical extension within the recipient language.

The proposed model demonstrates that semantic change is closely correlated with frequency and functional diversification. Borrowings that show high frequency across multiple discourse domains tend to undergo greater semantic expansion and polysemy, whereas low-frequency or stylistically marked borrowings often preserve narrower or more specialized meanings. This finding aligns with usage-based theories of language change, emphasizing the role of repeated contextual exposure in reshaping lexical meaning.

Grammatical integration constitutes the second major dimension of the model. The results indicate that French borrowings are progressively assimilated into the English grammatical system through regularization of morphological and syntactic behavior. Nouns tend to adopt English pluralization patterns, verbal borrowings conform to English tense and aspect morphology, and adjectives increasingly follow native English comparative and attributive structures. This gradual grammatical alignment illustrates that integration is not immediate but occurs through stages, ranging from partial accommodation to full systemic incorporation.

Importantly, the interaction between semantic evolution and grammatical integration appears to be bidirectional. Borrowings that achieve full grammatical integration are more likely to develop extended or figurative meanings, while semantically flexible items demonstrate higher adaptability to grammatical norms. This interdependence supports the central claim of the model: semantic and grammatical adaptation are mutually reinforcing processes rather than independent trajectories.

Another significant finding concerns the role of sociolinguistic and stylistic factors. French borrowings initially associated with prestige, formality, or elite registers gradually lose their marked status as they become entrenched in everyday usage. This stylistic neutralization facilitates deeper grammatical integration and semantic generalization. Conversely, borrowings that retain stylistic markedness often resist full grammatical regularization, remaining limited to specific registers or genres.

The model also contributes to broader discussions in contact linguistics by illustrating how long-term language contact results in structural and conceptual convergence rather than mere lexical enrichment. French borrowings in English not only expand the vocabulary but also influence semantic categorization patterns and lexical hierarchies within specific conceptual domains. Thus, borrowing emerges as a creative force in language evolution rather than a passive transfer of forms.

Despite these contributions, the study acknowledges certain limitations. The model is primarily based on written corpus data and may not fully capture spoken usage or diachronic variation across all registers. Future research could extend the model by incorporating spoken corpora, sociophonetic analysis, and comparative data from other donor languages to test its broader applicability.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the proposed model of semantic evolution and grammatical integration provides a systematic framework for understanding how French borrowings become fully functional elements of English. By integrating semantic, grammatical, cognitive, and sociolinguistic dimensions, the

model advances current approaches to lexical borrowing and offers a productive foundation for further cross-linguistic and corpus-based research.

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