

A Study of Chinese Loanwords in Modern English

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Abstract. There are more and more independent English words formed by Chinese pinyin in English words, and many Chinese borrowed words even appear in English dictionaries and become complete English words. Some researches have found that the particularity of English and historical reasons led to the occurrence of this phenomenon, but there are few articles explaining why this phenomenon occurs and what impact it will have on the culture of different countries in the future. Through the method of literature research and observation, this paper studies why there are more and more Chinese loan words and the importance of Chinese loan words to English, and draws the conclusion that nowadays Chinese loan words have become an indispensable part of English dictionary, which is due to the collision of different cultures and the formation of similar parts of Chinese culture and other countries increasingly frequent. The significance of this study lies in that understanding the development and evolution of languages will help to build a bridge of communication between Chinese and foreign languages and cultures.

Keywords: modern English, Chinese loan words, cultural exchange, loan words

1. Introduction

English from the 16th century onwards is regarded as modern English, and modern English is divided into Early Modern English and Modern English during this period. English words from the 19th century onwards are derived from borrowing words from languages around the world, and from making words in both traditional and modern ways. Modern English directly uses pinyin in Chinese to form new English vocabulary, which not only reflects the cultural heritage and historical connotation of Chinese, but also shows the cultural collision and cultural exchange between different countries. From the existing literature, Chen Shengli [1] pointed out in his paper that loan words had already appeared as early as the 16th century, and with the passage of time, the overall number showed an increasing trend. In terms of spelling, Putonghua Pinyin has the most words, mainly related to politics, economy and culture. For China, these loanwords transformed from Chinese have also become cultural symbols and Bridges representing cultural exchanges between China and the west, which have played an important role in helping China go to the world and let the world understand China.

As early as 2009, some scholars began to explore the phenomenon of borrowing words in depth. Zhu Mingming [2] points out that Chinese is an ideographic character with tone, which affects the borrowing of Chinese words from English. This cultural export can be divided into three periods, from the Qin Dynasty to modern times. Especially after the founding of the People's Republic of

China, due to the increasing international exchanges and cooperation, a large number of borrowed words reflecting the political aspects of new China and other aspects flooded into English. Domestic scholars are generally studying the history and evolution of Chinese loan words in English.

However, there are few researches on the Chinese loanword behavior in modern English and its different cultural connotations, and the understanding and application of this behavior in a deeper and more meaningful sense. Therefore, this paper studies and discusses the behavior of borrowing Chinese words in English.

2. Chinese Loan Words and English

2.1. Development of Chinese Loanwords in English

Modern English is divided into early Modern English and Modern English because of its long time span. However, Chinese was already present in early modern English as early as the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Therefore, in order to make English easier to understand and tell, most words borrowed from Chinese are transliterated, such as “mahjong, typhoon, yin and yang”, and other common borrowed words. Only a few Chinese loan words were produced by free translation, combination of sound and meaning and affixes. Later, after these Chinese loan words entered English, they underwent a period of transformation before becoming what people see now. When Chinese loanwords first appeared in English, it was in the late 16th century and early 17th century [3]. Chinese loan words appeared in early modern English because of the opening of new navigation and the development of science and technology, China began to trade with western countries and develop. Therefore, Chinese loan words litchi and tea appeared, and these words with Chinese characteristics were spread to the west [4]. Since then, Chinese and western cultures have just started to collide and communicate, but during this period, Chinese loan words only developed sporadically. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Qing government was forcefully opened to the world by Britain in the Opium War. During this period, kowtow and chop-suey were the most representative Chinese words borrowed from English [5]. In the 20th century, the exchanges and cooperation between China and the rest of the world continued to increase, and new words reflecting the political aspects of the new China continued to flow into English, forming new English words. This will continue to happen as China continues to develop. In recent years, for example, even the Chinese Internet buzzwords "no zuo, no die" and "you can you up" have been included in Urban Dictionary, a foreign dictionary of English slang. The Urban Dictionary even has an accompanying explanation for the next sentence of "you can you up", "no can no BB" [6].

2.2. Cultural Background of Chinese Loanwords in English

Palmer once said, "Language faithfully reflects the whole history and culture of a nation, its games and amusements its beliefs and prejudices. That is now quite clear" [7]. It is inevitable for us to understand the cultural background. Bao Shasha [8] mentioned in her paper that the main sources of Chinese loan words are Mandarin and the dialects of various cities in China. For example: tea china, oolong, wonton, long time no see, people mountains, people sea, etc. There are even words about food, clothing, science and technology, culture, religion, art, entertainment, sports, politics, economy and other aspects. For example, “dingho” is the name of a famous Oriental grocery chain store, and it has even been included in some dictionaries [7]. This is because these words are borrowed to a large extent because they have rich Chinese cultural connotations and can well reflect the life of the Chinese people, and the Chinese words borrowed in different periods are different. To some extent, the borrowed words can well reflect the different periods that China went through at that time. For example, in today's reform and open policy, Chinese words, such as reform and open policy, one country with two systems are more likely to be borrowed. But before the founding of the People's

Republic of China in modern times, due to the country's isolation, the Chinese words that entered the English language during this period became gambling, opium, corruption and other bad words like “yen, Fanta, Yemen” and so on.

2.3. Different Sources of Chinese Loanwords in English

Chinese culture is extensive and profound, among which the Chinese language is countless. Different parts of China have different languages, and even one region has different languages. Although Mandarin is the most commonly heard language in China, some of the Chinese borrowed from English are not Mandarin, but dialects of different regions, such as: Cantonese borrowed words, Fujian borrowed words and other Chinese borrowed words. On the other hand, most Chinese borrowings about food come from Cantonese borrowings, such as “wonton, chow fan, chow sum”, etc. The number of these Cantonese borrowings is no less than that of Mandarin, which is also caused by the special geographical location of Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Last but not least, these Fujian loanwords are all related to tea, such as “bohea, pekoe and congou”, which shows British and American people's love and keen interest in Chinese tea. “lama, yak, doz”, and other words from a handful of democratic languages have entered the modern English dictionary [9].

2.4. Influence of Chinese Loanwords in English

Influenced by the Chinese language, many borrowed words about food flow into English, and then these borrowed names of food also flow into Europe and the United States and other countries and are loved by people. Like “ramen”, the egg noodles. It comes from the Chinese word “la mian”. The word tea is from Fujian and Guangdong. Tea was introduced to Europe by the Portuguese in the early 1600s, and by the 1740s the British were experimenting with growing their own tea and getting into the habit of putting sugar in it. The British love tea not because it is a necessity, nor because it is their own history and heredity, but because of the subjugation and assimilation of different cultures. Although tea is native to China, tea has become a loanword in English. Moreover, many people want to visit China because of these delicacies, which further deepens the cultural exchange between China and the west. These loan words are not only adaptable but also appealing. For example, the word “tea” is no longer only used in relation to China. It has also become a basic word of English and formed many new words, such as “teacup [10], dim sum” and so on. According to incomplete statistics, the number of other English matching words made up of the word tea reached an astonishing 200 or so. “Dim sum” and other words carry forward Chinese food culture and Chinese cultural traditions and values, and reflect different cultural exchanges and mutual influence. But there are not only words about food, there are even words about clothing. One of the earliest words for clothing was silk, which passed through the Silk Road and came into English in 888 through Latin and Greek. In the later English also naturally appeared a lot of silk and textile related Chinese loanwords. For example, “satin, cheongsam”, and other Chinese loanwords. Little also not, of course, culture, religion, philosophy or related words, such as “Confucius, Taoism, Padua, zen”, etc. These Chinese borrowed words have distinct Chinese cultural characteristics and strong vitality. They influence the future vocabulary of English. “Surprisingly, the impact of China's economic growth on international English has been greater in Chinese than in English-speaking countries”, said Payack, president of the Global Language Watchdog [6].

2.5. The Future of Chinese Loanwords in English

With the increasingly frequent contact between China and western countries, western countries are becoming more and more interested in Chinese culture, which will inevitably lead to the spread of Chinese culture. And Chinese loan words are bound to leave a strong ink in the dictionary of western

countries, and become veritable English words. However, some words with heavy Chinese characteristics, such as “dizi”, “jiaozi” and other words, may make people in western countries feel incomprehensible and strange to them, and they do not know how to use them. For this reason, I suggest adding a Chinese in front of these words, such as: Chinese dumpling [11] et al. In this way, they can know the source of these words and strengthen foreigners' understanding of Chinese culture, and enhance the collision and communication between Chinese culture and foreign culture. From the perspective of linguistic research, cultural loan words are not only a bridge of cultural export and exchange between countries, but also known as "ambassadors of different cultures" [12]. Now, with the developed network, people on the earth have been closer and closer, and various cultures are colliding and communicating, and borrowing words has played a no small role in this. It is precisely because of the rapid development of science and technology, today's society is in the era of information explosion, which promotes Chinese loan words to the world [13]. Therefore, in the future, Chinese loanwords will only appear more and more in the dictionaries of western countries. This phenomenon is the need of practical communication, while English vocabulary is in a state of change and movement. Therefore, only by constantly absorbing fresh words and learning to metabolize words, the existence of this language will last for a long time. Chinese borrowing words is one of the important ways of English metabolism, and in the future, with the continuous exchange of cultures, Chinese culture will be constantly recognized and accepted. More and more Chinese loanwords will be deposited in English culture and recognized by more and more foreigners. Chinese culture will certainly have a greater and greater influence on English culture [14]. Of course, some interesting borrowed Chinese words can be properly introduced in Chinese teaching, so as to deepen the understanding and curiosity of Chinese learners about Chinese culture and stimulate their interest and enthusiasm.

3. Conclusion

This paper begins with the introduction of the cultural background, and tells the influence of Chinese loan words on English and the future scene of Chinese loan words in English. All these show the role and importance of Chinese loan words to western culture. Although many used Chinese loan words have not been included in English dictionaries, many Chinese loan words are still widely and frequently used. That is to say, with the strengthening of cultural exchanges and trade between China and the west, more Chinese loan words will continue to increase, so these Chinese loan words will eventually become real English words. These words greatly enrich the English vocabulary, promote the development of English, and bring new information to English users, broaden their horizons. With the development of China and the improvement of China's international status, more and more Chinese loan words flow to the world, which makes more and more countries start to pay attention to China and understand China. At the same time, the media also plays a powerful role in this process. The English Channel of China International Television and its different English programs in different regions are also continuously spreading to western countries fresh Chinese loan words with Chinese characteristics that represent the new China since the reform and opening up. There is no doubt that this phenomenon will make the Chinese loan words in the English dictionary more colorful. These are undoubtedly helpful things for foreign students who are interested in and studying Chinese. These not only enhance their interest in learning Chinese and broaden their horizons, but also help them understand more about cultural differences and different language phenomena [15].

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