CHAPTER SIX

COPIABILITY OF (BOUND) MORPHOLOGY

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It has often been observed that bound morphology is difficult to borrow. This paper examines this issue, expanding it to borrowing of grammatical elements in general. The traditional focus on bound morphology is argued to be the result of an unwarranted focus on form. By focusing on meaning instead, with this notion encompassing semantics and pragmatics, borrowability can be explained in a more comprehensive way. As the theoretical framework for the discussion, the Code Copying Model is used, as its joint account of global copying (overt forms) and selective copying (patterns and meanings) was found to offer better opportunities for describing the whole range of contact phenomena than some alternative models. The paper concludes that global copying is largely conditioned by semantic factors, while in selective copying frequency of use plays a more prominent role.

1 INTRODUCTION

It has often been observed that bound morphology is difficult to borrow. One of the main reasons for this is often assumed to be the high degree of structural coherence of these morphemes. They are part of highly structured and often paradigmatic constructions, and somehow this makes them hard to transfer across language boundaries. We feel that this view, while not incorrect, should be deconstructed a bit, in order to find out why structural coherence apparently constrains borrowability. This entails investigating which factors underlie structural coherence, and therefore ultimately cause the low borrowability of bound morphemes. We will argue for the crucial importance of a morpheme’s meaning, frequency of use, and discourse prominence.

In short, we will claim that:

1) Borrowing of bound morphemes is rare, but not constrained in an absolute sense, as it does occur;
2) Usually when grammar is borrowed, this proceeds without borrowing actual grammatical morphemes, whether morphologically bound or not;

3) Focusing on the boundedness of the morphemes tells only half of the story, as change cannot be explained adequately if the focus is on form only;

4) Bound morphemes are low in borrowability because they tend to have very general meaning; its formal characteristics (e.g. boundedness, high frequency of use) follow from that.

5) This view necessitates viewing meaning as including both semantics and pragmatics.

From here on, instead of using the traditional term “borrowing” we will apply the Code Copying Model and its terminology (Johanson 2002a), because we feel it is more descriptively accurate. “Borrowing” suggests the borrowed form is identical to its model, while such forms often develop quite different behaviour in the borrowing language. The Code Copying Model (henceforth: CCM) avoids this suggestion; in addition, it makes it possible to describe systematically which aspects of a linguistic unit have been copied. It makes a basic distinction between *global copying* (“borrowing” overt elements), *selective copying* (“borrowing” functions, meanings or combinatory patterns) and *mixed copying* (a combination of global and selective copying); the model is described in Section 3 below. Cast into CCM terminology, our main goal is to figure out why global copying of bound morphemes is rare, while selective copying of the meanings and functions that are often encoded by bound morphemes is fairly common.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The next section briefly reviews hierarchies of borrowability, and points out the issues we see as problematic. This will be followed by a brief description of the CCM, highlighting its compatibility with two other recent models of contact-induced change: *contact-induced grammaticalization* (Heine and Kuteva 2005) and *Pattern vs. Matter Replication* (Matras and Sakel 2007; Matras 2009). Considering our focus on bound morphemes, Section 3 will pay particular attention to what the CCM can offer the investigation of contact effects on morphology. Section 4 discusses the crucial notion of structural coherence, and demonstrates that a strictly structuralist view leads to generalizations that are too categorical, and, more importantly, misses the chance to provide an explanation of borrowability hierarchies that is grounded in actual lan-