

Paper title: Adaptation of French loanwords in Vietnamese

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Adaptation of French loanwords in Vietnamese

Due to the long-term contact between French and Vietnamese, the Vietnamese lexicon has many borrowed items from French, some of which have been nativized while some are marked as foreign through phonetic characteristics. These loanwords, especially the marked ones, have been adapted into the native patterns step-by-step through variations and competition between these variations. However, the curious question is whether the current loan tokens can shed light on the matter of loanword adaptation as a process of phonetic perception by native speakers. Peperkamp (2005) argues that in speech perception, the phonology of the listener's native language influences the decoding process of non-native forms but the actual mapping is not identical to the native phonology. It is proven through previous experiments that loanwords' features are originated phonetically through native speakers' perception of the words. "A non-native sound that is almost equidistant to two different native sounds is likely to show more variability in its adaptation than one is phonetically much closer to one of the native sounds than to all others" (Peperkamp 2005). This adaptation applies to both loanwords that have entered the lexicon of the borrowing language and loanwords that are borrowed once in a while.

This paper researches on a list of French loanwords in Vietnamese, their phonetic variations and the mapping of French sounds onto Vietnamese sounds. The adaptation of French consonants and clusters toward Vietnamese native patterns shows a great deal of variations, especially for those segments that are non-native and are similar to more than one native segment. The variations are originated from native speakers' perception of the foreign words. In the modern lexicon, these variations are not in conflict with each other. They are all well-established entries and some even show a semantic differentiation. The foreign words that remain different from the native phonological pattern of velar labialization can be either fossilized lexicon or just natively accepted variations. This mapping and variation is then compared with the adaptation of the current English terms into Vietnamese through a different list of English loanwords, focusing on the pattern of velar labialization.

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