

A Brief Analysis of Loanwords in Mandarin Chinese and Thai

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Abstracts

Both Mandarin Chinese and Thai languages incorporate an extensive array of loanwords, serving not merely as an enhancement to their respective linguistic expressivity but also as an embodiment of historical cultural interflow. This manuscript embarks on an analytical probe into the lexicons of loanwords in Mandarin Chinese and Thai, delving into the operational machinations of these borrowings throughout their evolutionary trajectory and their concomitant impacts on the corresponding linguistic systems. It seeks to draw parallels between the genesis and the borrowing paradigms of these Mandarin Chinese and Thai loanwords, surveying their concordances and divergences while shedding light on their underlying causation. This scholarly endeavor potentially paves the way for a more nuanced understanding of the loanwords in each language, furnishing insights into the quintessence and idiosyncrasies of the loanwords within these languages.

It was concluded that the genesis and progression of loanwords are profoundly intertwined with societal evolution, interactions between nations or ethnicities, and the exchange of economic and cultural elements. The origins of loanwords in the Mandarin Chinese-Thai linguistic context are notably expansive. The primary influx of loanwords in Mandarin originates from English, Japanese, and Sanskrit, with English-derived loanwords maintaining an unequivocal predominance. Following a similar pattern, Thai primarily incorporates loanwords from English, Pali, and Sanskrit, however, from a quantitative standpoint, no single linguistic source holds a definitive superiority in terms of the broad array of loanwords.

Keywords: Mandarin Chinese; Thai; loanwords; Comparative Study

Introduction

The world language system, an open and dynamically balanced symbol system, evolves based on a multitude of influences. With human linguistic interactions becoming increasingly common, the use of loanwords in various languages is expanding. The study of these borrowed words has always been of paramount importance in the linguistic community. Their practicality and significance become increasingly pronounced amidst the escalating language contact and intercultural communication. Loanwords, lexicons borrowed from one language to another, constitute one of the most significant linguistic phenomena globally, forming a vital part of a language's vocabulary.

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Shi Youwei emphasized in his seminal work, *Review and Reflection on Loanword Studies* (1991), that the principal challenge and focus in the field of loanword research lies in tracing the roots and paths of these myriad words. Although this task is onerous, it undoubtedly provides the foundational bedrock for dictionary compilation. His work includes a wealth of loanwords, all meticulously vetted and comprehensively evaluated for their origins and journeys.

In their groundbreaking book *A Study of Loanwords in Modern Chinese* (1958), Gao Mingkai and Liu Zhentan astutely itemized over 1500 loanwords, originating from languages such as English, French, German, and Japanese, as well as from China's ethnic minority languages, including Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan.

In *Morphological Assimilation of Loanwords in Thai* (2013), Yi Zhaozui postulates that the Thai system has been profoundly influenced by Buddhism, and it has assimilated a substantial number of loanwords from languages with rich morphological changes such as Sanskrit, Pāli, and English.

In light of this, an in-depth study of loanwords offers ample scope for research and holds considerable academic value. Such studies encompass the nature and characteristics of loanwords, the sources from where they are borrowed, their semantic evolution, and comparisons across various languages. This research specifically focuses on loanwords found in Mandarin Chinese and Thai. It scrutinizes their respective origins, highlighting similarities and discrepancies. Through this study of Mandarin and Thai loanwords, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview and examine the evolutionary journey of loanwords within these languages.

Research Objectives

By analyzing a dictionary of loanwords in Mandarin Chinese and Thai this study attempts to

1. compare and analyze the differences in the sources and borrowing methods of loanwords in these languages thereby examining their respective characteristics and variations.
2. compare and analyze the similarities in the sources and borrowing methods of loanwords in these languages thereby examining their respective characteristics and variations.

Literature Review

In *Chinese Loanwords in Modern Thai* (1984), Pranee Kruajoranusard primarily discusses the phonetic and semantic alterations that occur when loanwords from Chinese dialects are incorporated into the Thai language.

In *A Preliminary Analysis of Chinese Vocabulary Characteristics in Thai* (2005), Sun Shuqin conducts a comparative review of Chinese loanwords in Thai and their corresponding terms in Modern Chinese, examining their commonalities and discrepancies. She underscores the significant role these Chinese loanwords play in enriching Thai culture.

In *Chinese Loanwords in Thai* (2011), Kavee Phairatsawet documents a collection of 300 Chinese loanwords found in the Thai language. Through an analytical study of these entries, the author explicates the historical influence of the Chinese language and culture on Thai from antiquity to the present.

In *Loanword Studies in Thai* (2005) published by the Academic Department of PBC Publishing, a comprehensive analysis was carried out on the loanwords in Thai. The author posits that these loanwords embody the cultural structure and categories of the linguistic society, thus holding significant research value.

Research Conceptual Framework

“Loanwords” also known as borrowed words, are lexical items that one language borrows from another. Loanwords constitute one of the most significant linguistic phenomena worldwide and form an essential part of a language's vocabulary. Hence, the exploration of loanwords from a linguistic standpoint provides vast research opportunities and holds considerable academic value. This field of study encompasses the nature, characteristics, borrowing etymology, semantic evolution, and comparative aspects of loanwords across different languages.

Upon the foundational assessment of the primary sources of loanwords in Mandarin Chinese and Thai languages, a preliminary analysis of the modes of borrowing employed in Mandarin Chinese and Thai loanwords can be undertaken by examining the formal correlation between the loanwords and their source languages.

Table 1 Borrowing methods of Mandarin Chinese & Thai loanwords

Languages		Types		
Mandarin Chinese (MC)	Borrow sound	Half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning	Simply borrowing form	Borrowing of both sound and form
Thai (T)	Borrow sound	Simply borrowing form	Borrowing of both sound and form	Half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning

In MC, there are four methods:

A. Borrow sound, often referred to as “transliteration”, involves borrowing not only the meaning of a word but also its pronunciation during the loanword process. It is essentially the transposition of sounds and inherently incorporates a transcription aspect from a textual perspective.

B. Half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning. This is also referred to as partial phonetic translation and partial semantic translation, or phonetic plus semantic translation. It refers to the process whereby a part of the word is translated phonetically, and another part is translated semantically. Alternatively, a meaning indicator in MC is added to the basis of the phonetic translation of the source word. The phonetic component thus serves as a foreign language element. This translation method is mostly suitable for the borrowing of compound words.

C. Simply borrowing form. This entails borrowing only the Chinese character writing form of the borrowed word, while the pronunciation still follows MC conventions. The practices within this category vary greatly.

D. Borrowing of both sound and form. This method involves borrowing both the

pronunciation and the writing form of the borrowed word simultaneously, constituting the most thorough form of loanword adoption.

In T, there are also four methods:

A. Borrow sound. Clarity and consistency are achieved by transcribing foreign-origin words phonetically into Thai. The readability of the text and the articulation of the language maintain a relatively integral relationship with the source words.

B. Simply borrowing form. Derived based on the alphabetical structure of foreign words, these loanwords are noted with corresponding Thai alphabets and formed by following Thai spelling rules.

C. Borrowing of both sound and form: This method refers to the loanwords that borrow both form and sound, meaning they are written with corresponding Thai letters based on the alphabetical structure of foreign-source words while maintaining the pronunciation of the original words.

D. Half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning These refer to the words that represent the meaning of the word textually while maintaining the effectual vocabulary of the original words.

Materials and Methods

1. Source of Data

The central textual material examined in this study originates from dictionaries of loanwords in Mandarin Chinese and Thai. Specifically, these dictionaries include *Chinese Loanword Dictionary* by Gao Mingkai and Shi Youwei (Shanghai: Shanghai Dictionary Publishing, 1984) and *Dictionary of Thai Loanwords* by the Royal Institute of Thailand (Bangkok: Aksoncharoen Tatsan Publishing House, 1996).

2. Research Methodology

A method of contrastive analysis is employed to conduct a comparative examination of the loanword systems in Mandarin Chinese and Thai, focusing on various aspects such as their sources and borrowing mechanisms.

Significance

Mandarin Chinese and Thai languages both possess a considerable repertoire of loanwords. These not only enrich the expressive capacities of both languages, but also reflect the historical-cultural exchanges between the nations. Given the preceding lack of comprehensive comparative studies on the loanword systems of both languages, this paper endeavors to undertake a contrastive examination of Chinese and Thai loanwords, grounded on corpus analyses and reliant on the theory of linguistic contrast. Concurrently, this study, rooted in corpus, will explore the origins, evolution, and borrowing mechanisms of Chinese and Thai loanwords, analyzing their similarities and discrepancies and elucidating the reasons behind them.

Comparison of the origins of loanwords in Mandarin Chinese and Thai languages

The loanwords within Mandarin Chinese and Thai are derived from a diverse array of languages and cultures. A comparative analysis summarizing their provenance can be articulated as follows:

1. The main sources of Mandarin Chinese loanwords

The inevitable mutual borrowing of languages, resultant from contacts established through social interactions, communication, trade, and cultural exchanges, has led to a fascinating evolution and development in human language. In Mandarin Chinese, this intriguing practice of loanword borrowing has endured for more than a millennium. Over the past several decades, China's reform and opening-up have allowed a more extensive interaction with international communities, triggering a novel influx of imported and assimilated loanwords enriching the Mandarin Chinese vocabulary. These borrowed elements emanate from a great range of backgrounds. As explicated in *Chinese Loanword Dictionary* (Shanghai: Shanghai Dictionary Publishing 1984), a comprehensive tally offers insights into the etymological dissemination of loanwords within Mandarin Chinese, as detailed in the following chart.

Table 2 The etymological distribution of loanwords in Mandarin Chinese

Languages	Quantity	Percentage
Sanskrit	762	9.84%
persia	84	1.08%
Turkic	53	0.68%
Arab	109	1.41%
Khitan	83	1.07%
Russian	368	4.76%
Britain	3313	42.81%
Tibetan	250	3.23%
Mongolian	371	4.79%
Manchu	160	2.06%
Uighur	79	1.02%
Evenki	60	0.77%
Japanese	842	10.87%
Other	904	11.66%
Total: 7438 items		

Source statistics table of *Chinese Loanword Dictionary*

The gleaned data from the table indicates that the dictionary encompasses 7438 entries, with a substantial proportion of loanwords derived from English, Japanese, and Sanskrit. The prevalence of English loanwords is evidenced by its 42.81% share of the total, followed by Japanese and Sanskrit loanwords accounting for 10.87% and 9.84% respectively. In addition, loanwords originating from Russian, Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, and Arabic form a significant part of the linguistic diversity. Loanwords from other languages collectively constitute 11.66% of the total. These other languages encompass Korean, Vietnamese, Malay, Indonesian, German, Burmese, Latin, French, etc. To provide a more intuitive representation

of the aforementioned data, a bar chart visually depicts these details, as elaborated upon below.

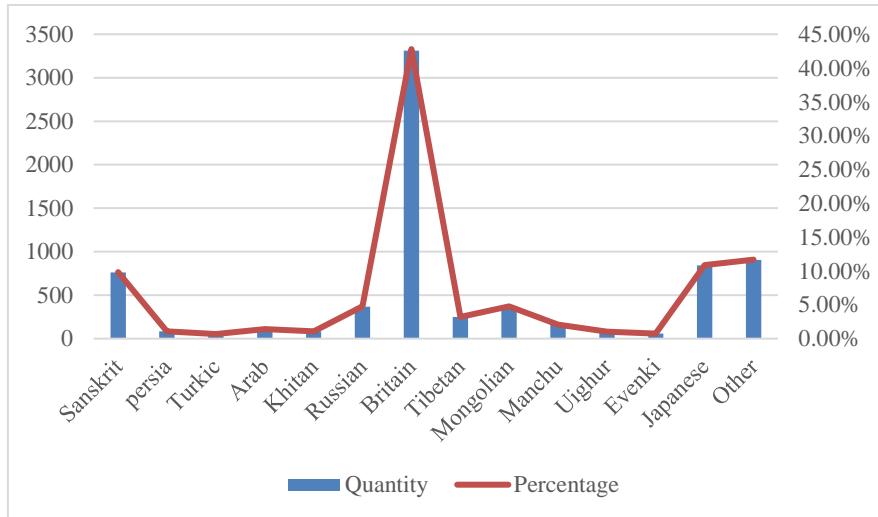


Figure 1 The etymological distribution of loanwords in Mandarin Chinese

2. The main sources of Thai loanwords

The phenomenon of loanword borrowing in the Thai language has a profound history. Dating back to 1238 AD, the establishment of the first ruling monarchy in Thai history, the Sukhothai Dynasty, marked the introduction of Sanskrit, Pali, and Khmer words as evidenced on the dynasty's inaugural stone tablet. This suggests that the Tai people had extensive cross-cultural interactions with various ethnic groups prior to the official foundation of their nation, fostering a cultural interchange, religious proliferation, and ethnic amalgamation, all of which have left deep imprints on the Thai language.

Post-Sukhothai Dynasty, there has been an upswing in the documentation of loanwords in Thai historical records. Though there is extensive research in various domains of Thai linguistics, it is germane to note that the studies on Thai loanwords are particularly substantial. This body of research primarily delves into the rationale behind borrowing foreign words, the etymology, methodologies of adoption, and temporal aspects of their assimilation.

A linguistic insight into Thai loanwords can be gleaned from the *A Dictionary of Thai Loanwords* compiled by the Royal Society of Thailand (Bangkok: Aksoncharoen Tatsan Publishing House, 1996). This tome of linguistic knowledge offers a comprehensive etymological distribution of loanwords within the Thai language, as outlined below.

Table 3 The etymological distribution of loanwords in Thai

Language	Quantity	Percentage
Sanskrit	1162	23.47%
Japanese	128	2.58%
Khmer	646	13.04%
Pali	1190	24.03%
Chinese	433	8.74%
English	1213	24.50%
Malay	47	0.94%

Indonesia	19	0.38%
French	34	0.68%
Arab	26	0.52%
Other	53	1.07%

Total: 4951 items

Source statistics table of *A Dictionary of Thai Loanwords*

Considering the aforementioned data, the compendium comprises a sum total of 4,951 entries. Within these loanwords, those that are engendered from English, Pali, and Sanskrit are relatively more populous. Entries of English origins compose 24.50% of the overall inventory, while those of Pali and Sanskrit origins contribute 24.03% and 23.47% respectively. Words traced back to Khmer constitute 13.04%, whereas those stemming from Chinese represent 8.74%. Subsequent to these, a roster of loanwords stemming from an array of languages like Japanese, Malay, Indonesian, French, Arabic, among others, is noticed.

Conjoining these, there is also a marginal assortment of lexical items borrowed from a miscellany of other languages, incorporating Korean, Tamil, Persian, and Burmese, which account for a diminutive 1.07% of the total. To delineate this distribution in a more visually assimilable format, the ensuing bar chart encapsulates these statistics:

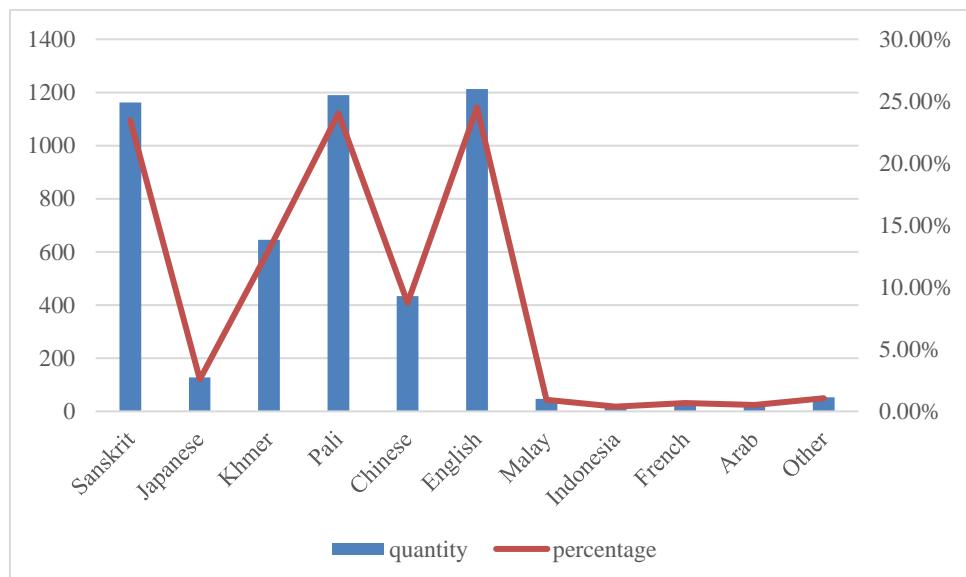


Figure 2 The etymological distribution of loanwords in Thai

3. Summarize

Based on the aforementioned data, it can be inferred that throughout the course of its historical trajectory, China has engaged in multifarious interactions with various civilizations, with linguistic reciprocations and borrowing between these cultures ceaselessly prevailing. Amidst the late nineteenth century, Western nations and neighboring Japan rapidly ascended to potent capitalist statuses, whereas China, owing to its protracted policy of seclusion, was left significantly lagging.

Upon the opening up of China, a select assemblage of enlightened Chinese individuals embarked on a conscientious endeavor to assimilate Western knowledge, resulting in an unprecedented surge in the appropriation of foreign lexicon in the Chinese language. The predominant sources of this linguistic borrowing during this era were predominantly English and Japanese.

Conversely, post the establishment of the People's Republic of China, nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom, in unison with other Western countries, deployed hostile blockading strategies against China. Concomitantly, Japan chose to fall in step with the United States as a follower and military confederate. As an inevitable repercussion of these geopolitical factors, the direct linguistic influence exerted by the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and others upon the Chinese language began to attenuate. Simultaneously, for an initial period, China advocated a policy of close alignment with the Soviet Union, thereby earmarking Russian as the cornerstone of foreign linguistic borrowing during this epoch.

Such linguistic influences reflect more than mere historical events; they are symptoms of global dynamics where nations such as Europe and the United States leverage their formidable economic advancement while countries like Japan and South Korea capitalize on their vibrant cultural industries.

This supreme advantage engendered a subsequent zenith of foreign word borrowing in Chinese, a phenomenon that persists presently. Conversely, subsequent to the inception of the People's Republic of China, pronounced alterations emerged in ethnic affiliations. The status of ethnic minorities began to experience an enhancement, cultivating substantive progress in equitable interrelations among disparate ethnic collectives.

Recognized as indispensable constituents of the multicultural national tableau, the cultures of ethnic minorities garnered increasing attention. Numerous distinctive terms, originating from the vernacular of these ethnic minorities, have incrementally found their way into contemporary standard Chinese. This phenomenon has served to enrich the compendium of borrowed lexicon inherent within the Chinese language system.

The historical trajectory delineating the incorporation of loanwords in the Thai language spans a significant epoch. As early as 1826, vestiges of the Sukhothai Dynasty encode the presence of multifarious loanwords, deriving from Sanskrit, Pali, and Khmer origins. Although the influence infiltrating from these three languages onto Thai manifests a longstanding lineage, their respective pathways and methodologies for impact exhibit remarkable heterogeneity. The substantial impact borne by Pali and Sanskrit on Thai is intimately intertwined with Thailand's Buddhist cultural fabric. A profusion of lexical entities filtered into Thai, accompanying the ingress of ecclesiastical and cultural motifs, underwent a gradual diffusion from the echelons of aristocracy to the commonplace existence of the masses.

Conversely, the imprint of Khmer is birthed from the Thai's geographical adjacency to its companion, Cambodia, forged by enduring political, economic, and cultural affiliations shared twixt the two nations. Among the panoply of foreign loanwords furnishing Thai, the lion's share emanates from English. Contrasting the prior mentioned impacts exerted by Pali, Sanskrit, and Khmer, the reverberations of English are entwined intricately with the colonial tapestry woven by Western dominions, prominently Europe and the United States, across the Asian expanse. Though chronologically a latecomer, this impact outreaches others in

dimensions of both profundity and magnitude, engraving an indelible mark across fields of education, technology, international commerce, and quotidian life.

As for alternative linguistic origins infusing loanwords into Thai, inclusive of lexical repertoire from Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, French, Arabic, and other tongues, these words have been assimilated into Thai through an array of conduits, such as ethnic amalgamation and economic and cultural trades, at disparate historical junctures of Thailand. A scientifically cogent exposé on the polymorphous fount of loanwords permeating Thai can only be accomplished through a holistic consideration of an array of historical, societal, and cultural factors.

Comparison of borrowing patterns of loanwords in Chinese and Thai languages

The assimilation schema of loanwords within Chinese and Thai linguistic systems underscores the multifaceted penetrations of these languages, encompassing their historical development, cultural amalgamation, and international discourse. This linguistic manifestation echoes not only vestigial hints of archaic civilizational interactions but is also profoundly calibrated by contemporary global confluence and technological ascendency. The ensuing comparative scrutiny ventures into the absorptive procedures of loanwords exercised within Chinese and Thai, rendering a holistic apperception of the ensuing symbiotic cultural integration and linguistic progression interwoven between these two lingual disciplines.

1. Borrowing methods of Mandarin Chinese loanwords

In Shi Youwei's *Chinese Loanword Dictionary* he categorizes the ways in which Chinese borrows foreign words into four types: borrow sound, Half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning, Simply borrowing form, Borrowing of Both Sound and Form. In this discussion, we will categorize these into four modes. Analyzing the 7,438 words compiled in *Chinese Loanword Dictionary* the results are as follows:

Table 4 Borrowing methods of Mandarin Chinese loanwords

Type	Borrow sound	Half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning	Simply borrowing form	Borrowing of Both Sound and Form	Total
Quantity	5956	233	599	650	7438
Percentage	80.07%	3.13%	8.05%	8.73%	100%

2. Borrowing methods of Thai loanwords

The methods of borrowing foreign words in Thai can also be categorized into several types. In this study, we classify the 4,951 foreign words compiled in the *A Dictionary of Thai Loanwords* compiled by the Royal Society of Thailand (Bangkok: Aksoncharoen Tatsan Publishing House, 1996) The statistical results are as follows:

Table 5 Borrowing methods of Thai loanwords

Type	Borrow sound	Simply borrowing form	Borrowing of Both Sound and Form	Half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning	Total
Quantity	1382	2104	785	680	4951
Percentage	27.91%	42.49%	15.85%	13.73%	100%

3. Summarize

In evaluating the stratification of loanword borrowing methods operationalized within the dual languages under assessment: Mandarin Chinese and Thai, the transliterated constructs emerge as the most distinguishable category. The primary fraction of Mandarin Chinese transliterated words forms the crux of its linguistic borrowing, representing a commanding 80.07% share of the accumulative quantity. Conversely, words exhibiting half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning constitute the minimal percentage, scantily contributing up to 3.13%. Within Thai, monotonous borrowing of form prevails as the predominant segment, accounting for approximately 42.49% of the total. The words incorporating half borrowed sound and half borrowed meaning register the least representation, constituting 13.73%. This instrumental variance is attributable to the expansive transliterations of Chinese lexical entities.

The origins of the words are traced back to English, whilst a vast array of Thai words are simple morphological adaptations from Pali, Sanskrit, and Khmer. Mandarin Chinese and English use radically dissimilar graphical symbols, rendering morphological borrowing virtually impossible. Consequently, the generation of novel loanwords must be achieved by phonetic transcription using Chinese characters. Contrary to this, no parallel constraints persist amongst Thai, Pali, and Sanskrit. A comprehensive examination of the borrowing methodologies employed in Mandarin Chinese and Thai languages reveals an extensive spectrum of loanword origins, complemented with numerous methodological similarities. Nevertheless, the divergent sources of borrowing, the structural formation, and the written codification of the two languages contribute to differentiated emphasis in their respective loanword borrowing mechanisms. Consequently, even within analogous categories, the distinctive linguistic characteristics continue to stand out.

Analysis on the causes of similarities and differences between Mandarin Chinese and Thai loanwords

1. Common Ground

The focal point of this study comprises of the examination of borrowed lexicon within the Mandarin Chinese and Thai vernaculars. By assimilating relevant data, conducting computational analysis, and executing an initial examination, the fundamental attributes pertaining to the borrowed lexis in both vernaculars have been explicated. This foundational understanding enables a subsequent comparative evaluation, illuminating the presence of two congruous facets in the implementation of loanwords within both the Mandarin Chinese and Thai languages.

(1) Mandarin Chinese and Thai borrowed lexicon showcase a broad spectrum of origins. As observed in the "Chinese Loanword Dictionary" and "A Dictionary of Thai Loanwords" source statistics tables, the diversity of sources for both linguistic systems is evident, encompassing not only the amalgamation of indigenous ethnic dialects but also the incorporation of linguistics utilized in extrinsic nations. Notably, English-originated loanwords form a conspicuous portion of the foreign words in both languages. This underscores the historic influence of myriad cultures on both nations, with an especial prominence of European, more specifically, English and American influences. The commonality perceived in the two linguistic systems' borrowed words, in this regard, necessitates an exploration in parallel with the evolution of both nations. Precisely, this calls for illumination by correlating with the modern history of the two countries.

(2) There exists a multitude of methods for appropriating loanwords from both Mandarin Chinese and Thai, drawing notably from Thai loanwords. This phenomenon can be ascertained from its corresponding table, as well as from the table illustrating the borrowing patterns of Chinese loanwords.

2. Differences

The mechanisms of borrowing Chinese and Thai loanwords present distinct differences. For the most part, Chinese loanwords are appropriated from English. The two languages utilize disparate symbol systems: Chinese employs characters, indicative of an ideographic system that visually presents a two-dimensional planar structure; English, on the other hand, is a phonetic language that spells out phonetic sounds with elongated letters, visually depicting a linear structure. These profound disparities render the direct borrowing of English word forms into Chinese implausible, effectively eliminating the opportunity for English words to be borrowed into Chinese via morphological transference. Instead, the borrowing system is contingent on phonetic transcription, employing similar Chinese pronunciations to represent corresponding English words. Due to the inherent constraints of the modern Chinese character system, a large proportion of which constitutes phonograms, this transliteration process generally does not pose issues with the written form of Chinese characters.

The Thai language, contrastingly, chiefly borrows words from an array of sources, including English, Pali, Sanskrit, and Khmer, languages that predominantly employ phonograms. When loanword borrowing occurs, it simply requires the conversion of the source word's phonetic symbols into the corresponding Thai phonetic symbols, an approach that proves both uncomplicated and efficacious.

Conclusions

Through this study, the following conclusions have been reached:

1. The inception and evolution of loanwords are inherent to societal advancement and are fundamentally attached to international or interracial interaction, as well as economic and cultural exchanges. The extensive systems of loanwords present in the Chinese and Thai languages are the product of the contact, confrontation, and synthesis of the two cultures with foreign ones throughout their respective developmental trajectories. Additionally, the frequency and intensity of the intercultural exchanges directly influence the pace and extent of foreign word borrowing.

2. Both Chinese and Thai loanwords stem from an eclectic array of sources. Predominantly, Chinese loanwords are derived from English, Japanese, and Sanskrit, with English-originated loanwords exhibiting an absolute preeminence. Although Thai loanwords principally come from English, Pali, and Sanskrit, there is no single source of etymological origin that dominates in terms of quantity.

3. Despite some similarities, Mandarin Chinese and Thai loanwords also manifest significant discrepancies. An interrogation into the parallels and disparities within the loanword systems of these two languages necessitates a combined understanding of the characteristics imbued in both languages and cultures so as to furnish a comprehensive and cogent explanation.

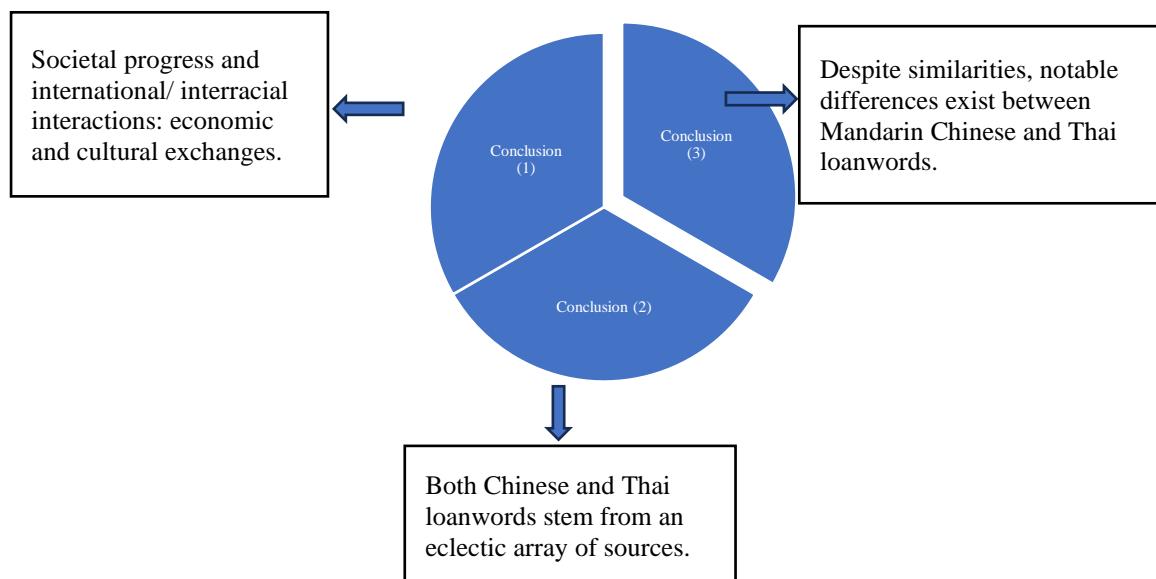


Figure 3 Conclusions

suggestion

1. Accurately find data sources it can help us analyze various problems
2. Identify what you want to compare and clarify the purpose and scope of the study. This helps focus and ensures in-depth and accurate research.

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