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Loan translations in the Southeastern United States

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1 Introduction

It has long been recognized that the Southeastern United States forms a strong linguistic area (Campbell 1997:341–344; Mithun 1999:319–320; Nicklas 1994; Rankin 1988). This is typically illustrated by way of structural comparisons among languages of the region. Lexical diffusion, however, is little discussed (though see Ballard (1982)). This paper aims to contribute to the study of the Southeast linguistic area by examining lexical borrowings in the form of calques or loan translations among the languages of the region.

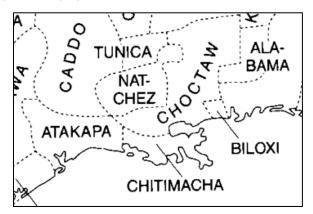
Matras (2009) distinguishes two types of borrowing – the replication of linguistic matter, and the replication of linguistic patterns, each of which can occur at different levels of grammar (lexicon, discourse, morphology, phonology, etc.). When pattern replication is widespread through a geographic zone, this is known as a CONVERGENCE AREA (Matras 2009; Weinreich 1966). The U.S. Southeast appears to be one of these zones, with extensive pattern borrowing in grammatical structures and even parallel grammaticalization (Campbell 1997:341–344; Heaton 2014; Hieber forthcoming; Mithun 1999:319–320; Mithun to appear). At the level of the lexicon, the replication of linguistic matter is generally referred to as a LOANWORD, while the replication of a linguistic pattern is termed a CALQUE or LOAN TRANSLATION. In many cases it is difficult to determine which terms are loans and which are independent innovations, and doing so often requires additional knowledge about the sociolinguistic history of the speakers that used them. Like Thomason & Kaufmann (1988) and Matras (2009), I take language contact to be a matter of contact between speakers attempting to accomplish communicative goals, rather than an abstract contact between linguistic systems. It is the sociolinguistic history of speakers that determines the results of language contact. As such, this paper will also briefly discuss the social situations in the Southeast that could explain the patterns of loan translations in the region.

This study focuses on data from three languages in the Southeast: Chitimacha (C), Ishak (known as Atakapa in the literature¹; I), and Biloxi (B), with occasional data taken from other languages of the region as well (additional abbreviations are given in Appendix I: Abbreviations). Unless otherwise stated, data for the sample come from the following sources:

¹ The term *Atakapa* comes from the Choctaw term for 'cannibals', and is strongly despised among present-day members of the Ishak community. They prefer their native term *Ishak* 'people', a preference I honor here.

Chitimacha: Hieber (2013); Ishak: Gatschet & Swanton (1932); Biloxi: (2012). I retain the transcription of the original in all cases. The location of these three languages at the time of European contact is shown in Figure 1, which depicts present-day Louisiana and the surrounding regions (from Mithun 1999:xvii–xix).

Figure 1. Languages of the Gulf south (from Mithun 1999:xvii–xix)



Chitimacha and Ishak are, to the best of our present knowledge, isolates, though there have been numerous attempts to show their relatedness (Gursky 1969; Haas 1951; Haas 1952; Swadesh 1946; Swanton 1919). Biloxi is a distant member of the Siouan family. Between these three languages sit the Muskogean language Choctaw, and another isolate Natchez. Little data is available for Natchez or Choctaw that allow researchers to easily determine the makeup of compound words without requiring extensive knowledge of the grammar, and so data for these languages were not included in this study. Nevertheless, the three languages included in the sample are sufficient to establish diffusion over a linguistic area, and suggest that any borrowings may have spread through the intervening languages, Natchez and Choctaw, as well.

The paper examines first the different types of borrowings related to or motivated by European contact in §2.1, and then the borrowings which derive from other languages of the region (or Mesoamerica, in the case of terms relating to maize) in §2.2, before drawing some general conclusions about the patterns seen in the data in §3.

2 Types of loan translations in the Southeast

2.1 Borrowings relating to European contact

A number of calques in the Southeast refer to items obtained through contact with Europeans:

	T rihkumera	< rihku 'wood' (David Kaufman, p.c.)
(2)	'cart, wagon, car'	
	C šuški	'on wood'
	I nec pal hidson	'wood flat small'
	B yaduxtą	< 'pull'
(3)	'church'	
	C haneč'in	'holy house'
	I a ^ñ hiwe-u	'powerful house'
	B yaqkode thi	'sing-together house'
(4)	'alcohol', etc.	
	C ku: tep	'fire water' (any alcohol)
	I kitsonc ak	'fire water' ('whisky')
	kitsak he	'strong whisky' ('beer')
	B anipha	'bitter water' ('whisky')
	anipha ckuuye	'sweet whisky' ('wine')
	aniphaxka	'sour water' ('beer')
(5)	'drunk, intoxicated'	
	C kap ku:kš nu:p-	'be dying of liquid'
	I kitsak ka-u	'whisky dead'
	B duniyê	'cause to be twisted'
(6)	'watermelon'	
	C čiška nowa	'ripe / mellow pumpkin'
	B kôôckuuyê	'sweet gourd'
(7)	'sugar'	
	C ney c'ahcc'ahcn	'sweet salt'
	I neck-ol	'sweet salt'
	B neck-ol	'sweet salt'
(8)	'earring'	
	C wa:š šahčti	'put in ear'
	I an hatkome	'in ear'
	B hauni citutka	'dangle shine'
	nixuxi hauni	'dangles from ear'

(9) 'pants'

C makta kap šahi 'put your buttocks in'

I cakiōl cukoke < 'put in'

B nįduxpê 'buttocks cloth'

(10) 'pocket'

C wiš tu:kun 'leg bag' (< tu?u 'hole')

I komhopc 'hanging hole'
B pahi yiki 'little sack'

In this category of calques, I also include terms for 'New Orleans'.

(11) 'New Orleans'

C tata ?atik'i 'big city'

I – (reported as 'big village' by Darensbourg (2014))

B Tą Nithąąyą 'big town'

There can also be diversity in the meanings of terms for items introduced by Europeans, as the word for 'shirt' in example (12) shows. Therefore not all terms for European items were direct loan translations from one language to another.

(12) 'shirt'

C kipi č'ušmpa 'sewn body'
I okotka-uc < 'cover'
B ptato są 'white cotton'

A number of the above terms focus on similar features of the item in question, but are not exact calques. Both the Ishak and Biloxi terms for 'clock', for example, relate the technology to the movement of the sun, but in different ways. Terms for animals brought by Europeans tend to be a semantic extension of terms for animals already known in the region, as (13) - (15) show.

(13) 'goat'

C kamčin t'išin 'bad-smelling deer'

B ithaa xuuhi 'stinking deer'

Cr – (connection to 'deer' reported by Brown (1998))

(14) 'horse'

C kiš ?atin 'big dog'

I tsanuk possibly 'run on the back'

B tahôôxka goat-like

(15) 'donkey, mule'

I anmañmañ 'long ears'

B tahôôxknixuxnaskê 'long-eared horse'

Os nąątąhtąą 'big ears' M haksobeš falaya 'long ears'

N wápkup ibuk wadá 'animal with long ears'

O aču·kas nashúsita 'long-eared horse'

The term *šiš neka k'amin* 'elephant' in Chitimacha is a variant on this theme, constituting a semantic extension from a mythological creature known as the 'long-nosed devil'.

Though clearly brought by Europeans, it is not clear that all the semantic parallels for some terms are in fact borrowings rather than independent innovations, as in the word for 'match':

(16) 'match'

C tep šanšti 'gives off fire'

I kolilawi < la-u 'blaze, burn'

B phêtiqq 'make fire'

Another loan translation that was also a semantic extension for European items can be seen in the terms for 'ribbon':

(17) 'ribbon'

C pe:špe:šn 'thin / ribbon'

I po / popo 'narrow' / 'ribbon'

One term that I only tentatively include under the category of European-induced calques is the term for 'hay'. It could be that the description of 'hay' as bad or dry grass spread with its use with European livestock, or it could simply be a non-lexicalized description.

(18) 'hay'

C po: č'iwin 'bad grass'
I oñ tsax 'dry grass'
B tąsuxwi 'dry grass'

Several items introduced by Europeans – perhaps including the numeral 'thousand' – were given terms using a descriptor of 'old' or 'ancient', as shown below. This was not a new pattern, but appears in other native terms as well, such as the Biloxi terms *isi axohi* 'old toe'

('big toe') and *caakxohi* 'old hand' ('thumb'). Also note that the term for 'sheep' in (19) is another semantic extension for non-indigenous animals.

(19) 'sheep'

C pu:p ?atin 'large rabbit' ('sheep')

I anhipon 'folded ears' ('rabbit' / 'sheep')

B cêtkohi 'old rabbit' ('sheep')

(20) 'apple'

C nanu ?atin 'big persimmon'
B tokono xahi 'ancient peach'

(21) 'thousand' and 'hundred'

C pu:p ?ašinč'at'a 'ancient / old man hundred'

pu:p 'rabbit' / 'hundred'

I hiyen 'pig, hog' / 'hundred'

B tsipjya 'old man hundred'

K čokpi 'hundred' čokfi 'rabbit'

(22) 'elephant'

C šiš neka k'amin 'long-nosed devil' B kawaxohi 'something ancient'

Example (21) also illustrates a fascinating pattern common throughout the Southeast, where terms for certain numbers are synonymous or derived from terms for animals, especially 'rabbit' for 'hundred'.

Unsurprisingly since these were the metals used for specie in the American colonies, terms for gold, silver, and copper are calques based on terms for 'money' + a certain color. The particular colors chosen for each type of metal vary from language to language, but the overall semplate ('semantic template', to borrow Levinson & Burenhult's (2009) term) is the same.

(23) 'gold'

C wa:p'it pinun 'red money' ('money' < 'cut pieces')

I laklakc kuts 'red coin/money/silver'

lakilāggstat 'yellow money' (also used for 'copper')

B axisah si 'yellow money'

(24) 'silver'

C wa:p'it mest'in 'white money' ('money' < 'cut pieces')

I laklakc < 'glitter' (also 'money', 'silver coin')

B axish są 'white money'

(25) 'copper'

C t'uskunkaci ?ič'item 'yellow metal' (also used for 'brass')

I kutsnăn tāt 'yellow iron' (also used for 'brass')

B axisah cuuti 'red money'

Interestingly, there appear to be almost as many calques for items acquired from the Europeans than there are for native items. This of course does not mean that the tribes of this region only began interacting with each upon the arrival of the Europeans. Instead, these items and the terms associated with them must have spread through the robust networks of trade and interaction that were already in place in the Southeast.

Brown (1998) provides ample evidence to this effect. His data show a decrease in Spanish loanwords in the Southeast from the southeastern-most part of this area to the western-most. In other words, the data suggest that Spanish borrowings spread from the point of contact with the Spanish in Florida to the rest of the Southeast linguistic area. Given what we know of the history of contact in the area, it must be the case that these words were not directly borrowed from Spanish into the Southeastern languages in each case, but rather diffused from one Native American language to the next. The major mechanism of this spread was the Creek Confederacy, which most scholars agree had a (mostly unidirectional) influence on the other languages of the region (Kimball 1994; Martin 1994; Sturtevant 1962). And while Chitimacha and other languages in the western part of this area were not known to have used Creek as a lingua france, they did use Mobilian Trade Jargon, which was spoken by members of the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes among others. This suggests a path of lexical diffusion of approximately the following:

(26) Spanish > Creek > Choctaw / Chickasaw > Mobilian Jargon > Chitimacha Given this already well-established path of diffusion for borrowings from Spanish, it is very likely that a similar chain of contact is responsible for the loan translations of the region as well, whether induced by European contact or indigenous to the area. It is to the local calques that I now turn.

2.2 Borrowings within the Americas

Moving away from calques stemming from European contact, we find a similar situation in the spread of terms relating to maize, another set of technologies and processes not indigenous to the Southeast. (27) 'corn husk'

I tso-ots tal 'corn skin/bark'

B ayêêkahi 'corn skin'

(28) 'bread'

C heiš paičpa 'baked flour'
I cukwak 'baked thing'

B pataaskooni 'bread' (< 'flat, wide')

The other possible calques vary too widely in their translation meanings to be considered loan translations. This may be due to the fact that the southeast already had an extended period of domesticated agriculture before the arrival of maize, focused around seeds, gourds, and beans (Fritz 1990). So when maize technology spread to the Southeast, local languages could adopt terms already in use, which would have been varied and manifold. A common semantic extension, for example, was the use of words meaning 'seed' to refer to maize (Hill 2006).

Keeping now within the Southeast linguistic area, body part terms seem to be a common source of loan translations, but it is easy to see how the meanings involved could have been independently innovated as well, especially when the body part is associated with a specific function:

(29) 'womb'

C na:nš šahi child(?) container

Cr hopuetak-hute 'child-home' (Martin & Mauldin 2000:349)

(30) 'eye'

C kani 'eye' / 'grain, seed'

T -štósu 'head-seed' (Gursky 1969:100)

B tacoo su sapi 'black seed of eye' ('pupil')

(31) 'elbow'

C ?akt 'elbow' / 'reed, tube'

I est (/est/) 'elbow' āct (/ašt/) 'reed'

(32) 'skin', 'shell', 'bark'

C su?u 'skin' / 'bark'

I nohamc ku tal 'chicken egg skin' ('eggshell')

B ayaahi 'tree skin' ('bark')
ijtahi 'egg skin' ('eggshell')

(33) 'vein'

I pōck aⁿ 'blood house' B ayithi 'blood house'

(34) 'skull'

C kut kaci 'head bone' B phaa aho 'head bone'

Another very common pattern occurs among animal products using terms for 'grease' or 'liquid':

(35) 'honey'

C hihmu c'iya 'bee egg'
I miñ ak 'bee liquid'
B kax acini 'bee grease'

(36) 'lard'

I hiyen eñ 'hog grease'

(37) 'butter'

C mi: ku: nema 'milk grease' I nik eñ 'milk grease'

B waaktasacini 'cow breast grease'

O nafiči 'cow grease'

M wak (em)peš neha 'cow breast grease'

(38) 'milk'

C mi: ku: 'breast liquid'
B waaktasi 'cow breast juice'

(39) 'cheese' / 'clabbered milk'

C mi: ku: ya:niš 'hardened milk'

B waaktaspataaskooni 'cow juice [i.e. milk] bread'

A number of calques are words for or relating to animals of the region. The Biloxi word for 'groundhog' appears to be a calque from English rather than neighboring languages. The terms for 'chicken' and 'turkey' are related in both Ishak and Biloxi (though in the opposite semantic direction).

(40) 'possum', 'groundhog'

C suseyk's ?o:č'ipu 'woods hog'

I kakip hiyen 'forest hog'

B kcixkayo:ka 'swamp hog'

kcixka mąyįtka 'hog in the ground'

(41) 'chicken', 'turkey'

I nohamc ayip 'chicken in swamps' ('turkey')

B maaxi 'sacred turkey' ('chicken')

(42) 'gaspergou, freshwater drum'

C kipi ya:min 'hard meat'

I ya-u al laklak 'fish with hard flesh'

B o psahe 'corner fish'

(43) 'fin', 'shoulder'

C makš ?okun 'fish shoulder'

I nok hal 'back fin' ('tail, fin') < nok 'arm, wing, fin' + hal 'back'

nok teu 'back tail' ('shoulder')

B o imahį 'fish paddle'

A few final calques don't fall into any broader patterns:

(44) 'summer / year'

C yoič 'summer, year'
I ilu 'summer, year'

B amihca 'summer gone' ('year')

(45) 'field'

C hukaci 'split crop'

I nē-yuc (possibly from Chitimacha *ney ?uči-* 'work the earth')

B amooni 'land worked/made'

(46) 'fog, dust, smoke'

C ši? 'dust, ashes' šičt 'fog, smoke'

I won inaha 'like fog' ('damp, moist')

B ayuxka 'ash-like' ('fog')

(47) kick

C so:kš c'a:t- 'spear with foot'
B naxthê 'hit with the foot'

The remaining calques catalogued as part of this study may be either independent innovations or genuine loan translations, but it would be difficult or impossible to know for certain without a more detailed knowledge of the history of the area. Calques for parts of a building are based on body part terms, for example, but this is common the world over (cf. English *window* < Old Norse *vindauga*, literally 'wind eye', which itself replaced the Old English terms *eagbyrl* 'eye-hole' and *eagduru* 'eye-door').

(48) 'door'

C hanša?a 'house mouth'
I aⁿkat 'house mouth'

(49) 'window'

C hanša: mina:pu 'short house mouth'

I aⁿ kat mōk 'short house mouth'

(50) 'fireplace', 'hearth'

C tep kani 'fire eye'

I kidsonke hipal 'near the fire'

B phêtithi 'fire house'

In each of the following potential calques, the description of the item is so closely based on its function that independent innovation of the term is likely.

(51) 'chimney'

C tep šič šanťun 'fire smoke escape'

I kōtspon-nt'hanăⁿ 'hole cut for the smoke to go out'

(52) 'mud fish, buffalo fish, freshwater drum' (known for digging in mud)

C ney t'a:pa makš 'mud fish'

B omduti 'fish that eats the earth'

(53) 'pink'

C pinun kap ?ič'item 'red becoming white'

I kuts inaha 'red white'

B cuutkasa 'reddish white'

(54) 'meteor, comet' or 'Aurora Borealis'²

C kap mahe 'light tail

² It is not clear to me whether the term for 'Aurora Borealis' would have existed prior to European contact or was coined afterwards, but I suspect it was afterwards. In 1859 the greatest auroral event in recorded history

B įtka thąhį 'star runs' ('meteor, comet') įtka sįdoyą 'star tails' ('Aurora Borealis')

(55) 'hammer'

C ?am nehtuyna 'what they usually strike with'

I pamkamne < 'hit'
B masikthê 'hit metal'

(56) 'blacksmith', 'blacksmith shop'

C t'uskunkaci k'etuymiš 'one who usually beats metal' ('fblacksmith')

t'uskunkaci hana 'metal house' ('blacksmith shop')

B amaskthêhayi 'hit metal habitually' ('blacksmith')

amaskthê thi 'hit-metal house' ('blacksmith shop')

3 Conclusion

The sociolinguistic history of the Southeast provides ample opportunity for the cultural contact that could have given rise to these borrowings detailed in this paper. In addition to the influence of the Creek Confederacy and Mobilian Trade Jargon discussed in §2.1, there was ample population movement in the area that would have resulted in intense periods of contact between different language groups. Brown (1998) notes that the Koasati, Chickasaw, Shawnee, and Yuchi are all known to have settled in Creek territory at one point or another, and Biloxi and Tunica too cohabited an area near Marksville, Louisiana around the same time.

We have seen a number of broader patterns in the calques of the U.S. Southeast, such as semantic extension from known animals to new, the use of terms for 'grease' or 'liquid' to refer to animal products, body part metaphors to refer to parts of the house, the use of the term 'wood' for many European technologies constructed with it, and many more. Even words which do not fall into one of these specific semantic patterns tend to fall into certain semantic domains for which other loan translations can be found. Such is the case for terms relating to clothing and livestock, for example. In fact, very few Southeastern calques do not fit into some type of semantic or lexical pattern. This suggests that speakers in this region did not just calque words indiscriminately, but rather created calques in a way that matched already existing lexical patterns or semplates in the language, as we saw in the extension of calques using the term 'old' from indigenous items to European ones. This raises the following question for

occurred, and though it could not have been visible as far south as Louisiana, it was widely reported throughout all the newspapers of the time. Gatschet's documentation of Biloxi was conducted in January of 1885, well within the living memory of this event.

studies of loan translations: If loan translations tend to be members of broader semantic patterns in the language, which came first, the semantic pattern or the calque? Can the calquing of a set of terms give rise to a new semplate in the language? Could, hypothetically, Chitimacha have calqued several terms from Biloxi using the term 'old' (e.g. 'old hundred' for 'thousand'), and from this began to coin new terms with 'old' without having borrowed them from Biloxi first? If so, how could one tell the difference between a semplate-inspired calque and a direct calque? Historical-comparative data could help answer this question, but such techniques are not feasible for the many isolates of the region.

There is a second trend in the data too, which is that the majority of calques stem from some type of exogenous cultural contact with or spread from either Europe or Mesoamerica. And many of the remaining calques have a high chance of being independently innovated. These facts suggest that speakers are less likely to borrow a calque for terms that do not fill a cultural gap, the major exceptions to this appearing to be body part terms and their metaphorical extensions, and terms for food (which themselves are likely to be a matter of cultural borrowing).

Weinreich (1966:61) suggests that "a language with many restrictions on the form of words may be proportionately more resistant to outright transfer and favour semantic extension and loan translation instead." For Native American languages, known for their complex morphophonology and verb structures, this position has an intuitive appeal. But this fact alone cannot explain the patterns of borrowings seen in loan translations in the U.S. Southeast. Instead, we have seen that it is the sociolinguistic history of speakers and the nature of their intercultural contacts, as well as the existing semantic patterns of the language, which influence the types of calques that are likely to occur. Continued research in this area, bringing in data from additional languages of the U.S. Southeast, would make great strides in our understanding of the sociolinguistic motivations for the replication of lexical patterns.

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Appendix I: Abbreviations

B Biloxi (Siouan)

C Chitimacha (isolate)
Cr Creek (Muskogean)

I Ishak (i.e. Atakapa; isolate)

KKoasati (Muskogean)MMobilian Trade Jargon

O Ofo Os Osage

T Tunica (isolate)