

Литература

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CHINESE LOANWORDS IN AMERICAN ENGLISH

From the language of a small country on the edge of Europe, English has grown into the world language that embraces British, American, Canadian, Australian and other variants of English. Nowadays, world Englishes are gradually disappearing in the sweeping current of the American variety of English. More than 321 million American English speakers live in the U.S. Moreover, there are millions of learners of it as a second or foreign language.

Historically, the replenishment of the vocabulary of American English (AE) went in two ways: 1) by appearance of new words or by change of a word meaning; 2) by borrowing from other languages. The lexicon of AE contains words that can be traced back to over one hundred languages.

Words that pass from one language to another are referred to as 'borrowings' and can also be called 'loanwords'. In our book we studied the borrowings in AE from Native American, French, German and Spanish languages. *The object* of this paper is to study Chinese loanwords in AE.

Compared with other languages, Chinese contributes only a small portion of borrowings. The statistics from *the Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* [1] show that AE borrowed only some 1000 items from Chinese and that they are mainly about Chinese food and traditional customs. Most of them share Chinese pronunciation and are made up of Chinese characters, e.g., *chin-chin* is an exclamation used to express good wishes before drinking, comes from Chinese *qǐng* 請 "please; to invite"; *chop chop* from Cantonese *cuk1 cuk1* 速速, "hurry, urgent"; *chow mein* from Taishanese 炒麵 (*chau meing*), literally, stir fried noodle; from

Taishan came to the U.S. *feng shui* from *feng*, wind and *shui*, water 風水; it denotes an object or scene which is aesthetically balanced (generally used in construction or design), food: *chop suey*, *dim sum*, *ginseng*, *litchee* (fruit), to *kowtow* (to kneel with the forehead touching the ground), *guanxi* (a Chinese social concept based on the exchange of favors, in which personal relationships are considered more important than laws and written agreements), etc.

Most of words of the Chinese origin in AE were loanwords from Chinese. However, many Chinese words have also entered AE indirectly via other languages, particularly Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese, that have all used Chinese characters at some point and contain a large number of Chinese loanwords. Incidentally, such words as *judo*, *tycoon*, and *kamikaze* are Chinese but came into English via Japan.

Here are examples of some Chinese words and phrases that came over the Great Wall into the vocabularies of English speakers [2]:

"Gung ho" — Extremely enthusiastic and dedicated. It entered AE as a result of WW II. It comes from Mandarin Chinese *gōnghé*, the slogan of the *gōngyèhézuòshè*, the Chinese Industrial Cooperative Society. (The *gōng* in *gōnghé* means "work," while *hé* means "combine, join.") Marine Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson (1896-1947) heard the expression and thought it was well-suited to the spirit he was trying to foster among his Marines. Carlson began to use it as a nickname for meetings in which problems were discussed and worked out, and his Marines began calling themselves the "Gung Ho Battalion." *Gung ho* soon began to be used to describe any person who shows eagerness, as it still is today.

"Chow" — One of the pillars of Chinese culture may very well be its delicious cuisine, so the English word "chow," slang for "to eat" or "food," comes almost directly from the Mandarin *chǎo* (炒), which means "to sauté" or "to stir-fry."

"Typhoon" — The word "typhoon" entered AE mostly unaltered from its Mandarin root *dàfēng* (大风), meaning literally "great wind."

"Paper Tiger" — The phrase means "a person or thing that has the appearance of strength or power but is actually weak." It comes from the Chinese phrase *zhǐlǎohǔ* (纸老虎). It was Mao Zedong, who made it fa-

mous — he routinely used the phrase to criticize the U.S. during the 1950s and '60s.

"Lose face" — This phrase meaning "to be humiliated" comes from the separation of the Mandarin phrase for humiliation, *diūliǎn* (丟臉), into its constituent parts: *Diū* meaning "to lose" and *liǎn* meaning "face."

"Long Time No See" — While the exact origins of this phrase remain unclear (it may have come from Pidgin English spoken by Native Americans), this greeting is widely thought to have derived — perhaps even in tandem with the Native American phrase — from the Mandarin phrase *hǎojiǔ bùjiàn* (好久不見), which literally means "very long no see."

"Brainwashing" — A product of American interaction with Chinese during the Korean War, meaning "the systematic change of attitudes and beliefs", comes from the Mandarin *xǐnǎo* (洗腦), which means more or less the same thing.

"Tea" — It is well known that the tea trade itself originated in Asia. Surprisingly, the English word for "tea" followed a similar route, coming into English from the Xiamen-dialect Chinese word *t'e*, which is equivalent to the Mandarin *chá* (茶).

"Ketchup" — Even though there may be nothing more quintessentially American than ketchup and mustard on a hot dog, the actual word for the ever-popular tomato relish may originate from the Cantonese *kèhjāp* (茄汁) or *fānkèhjāp* (番茄汁), which roughly means "tomato sauce."

It seems likely English will borrow more from Chinese, as trade, cultural and personal connections between China and the U.S. grow. Whether future Chinese borrowings will be new edibles, cultural items or even philosophical terms depends on China's development and how the West responds. Hopefully, Chinese terms adopted in the U.S. will be more of the *guanxi* variety.

References

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