

Semantic Knowledge Of Students Of Intermediate Level At Govt. Gordon College Rawalpindi And Its Effects On Selected Words Borrowed From English Into Urdu

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Abstract

The current study aims to examine the semantic knowledge of the selected English words borrowed in Urdu by the students of grade 12 in a selected classroom in Rawalpindi. Furthermore, the study tends to find out the effect of semantic knowledge on those selected English words borrowed in Urdu. Data for this

study has been collected through a questionnaire comprising 20 English words borrowed in Urdu selected for the examination. A classroom of grade 12 consisting of 20 students both male and female aged 16-18 years has been selected. The range of denotative meanings of the borrowed words has been recorded using Google's dictionary provided by Oxford Languages. The semantic knowledge of the participants about these words has been calculated based on responses given by the students. The effect of the semantic knowledge of the participants on these borrowed English words has also been calculated mathematically. Thematic Analysis is used to investigate commonalities in the responses of the participants. Bloomfield's theory of Semantic changes has been utilized to see the semantic changes taking place in the words. The analysis of the data has revealed that the average semantic knowledge of the participants is 37.05% and this has made the borrowed words suffer an average semantic loss of 51.3%. Further, the analysis has shown that the borrowed words with more denotative range suffer more semantic loss and the participants have less semantic knowledge and vice versa. The current study can pave the way to find out how the borrowed words can be saved from undergoing semantic loss when they are used by the natives of the loan language.

Keywords: Semantic Knowledge, Semantic Loss, Denotative Meanings, Borrowed Words, Rawalpindi.

1. Introduction

Language is a ubiquitous phenomenon. It is a communication tool used by humans and animals to convey messages and information. There is an inevitable relationship of dependency, origin, similarities, dissimilarities, and cooperation among the languages in the world. No language in the world can claim independent completeness without having direct or indirect contact with other language(s) of the world. Egbe & Apkan (2017) observe that a language doesn't always contain all the words to convey its meanings and borrows words from the languages that are in relationship with this language. A particular language may have problems in terms of gaps in vocabulary which tend to be filled by a donor language. English and Urdu exist in the same vocabulary relationship. It is a quite common practice in the Urdu language to borrow words from the English language. Borrowing can be

defined as the use of words of one language into another without any change. Borrowing occurs chiefly when the target language doesn't have a word ready for use. Whenever a target language borrows words from a donor language, it leaves different impacts on the donor language. Changes such as modification, degradation, elevation, and narrowing semantic range take place in the donor language.

Whenever there is integration of languages between or among, the changes in donor language(s) are quite natural to occur. Anjum and Hassan (2024) observe that whenever one language passes from one generation to another, there is always a certainty that changes occur in the donor language.

Lexical borrowing is inevitable because no language in the world is complete in itself. All the languages of the world borrow words from other languages to fill lexical gaps. The language that borrows words is called the loan language whereas the language which lends the words is called donor language. The current study aims to not only study the process of borrowing as well as semantic knowledge of the users of the borrowed words. It further looks into the effect the semantic knowledge of the users creates on the borrowed words.

1.1 Research objectives

The current study is conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine the semantic knowledge of the users of the selected borrowed English words
2. To explicate the effect(s) of the semantic knowledge of the users on the selected borrowed English words

1.2 Research questions

The study tends to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the semantic knowledge of the students of intermediate level of the selected English borrowed words used in Urdu?
2. How does the semantic knowledge of the students of intermediate level affect the selected English borrowed words used in Urdu?

1.3 Delimitation of the Study

One classroom of grade 12 of Govt. Gordon Graduate College Rawalpindi, consisting of 20 students has been selected. The students of the class are both male and female. The participants age between 16-18 years. The researchers have easy access and permission to collect data for the study. Further, only 20 words of English have been selected because the paucity of space makes it almost next to impossible to investigate all the English words borrowed in Urdu.

2. Literature Review

Bahumaid (2015) looks into words that are borrowed from English into Hadhrami Arabic, which is spoken in Yemen. The changes in morphology and phonology-based alterations in the borrowed words are the researcher's primary area of interest. He notes the shift in meaning that took place in the words by simply categorizing them as broadening or narrowing. He has only acknowledged that words that are borrowed have increased the lexicon of Hadhrami Arabic; he has not explained the semantic shift in the borrowed words.

Anwar's (2017) research on Arabic borrowed words in Urdu is more methodical than Khan's (2014) work. She has maintained that semantic shifts have a major effect on people's lives in linguistic, cultural, and social ways. She has demonstrated how the Urdu language has been greatly impacted by semantic shift, metaphor, and amelioration.

Robert (2008) discussed semantic variations as an inherent aspect of any language. He has considered the context and discourse very important for the meaning of words. He further adds that polysemy is an important characteristic of words.

Aisha & et.al. (2020) see that borrowed English words experience many changes when they are used by native speakers of Urdu. They have investigated the semantic changes taking place during the course when the borrowed English words are used by the native speakers of Urdu. However, there has still been a lot of scope to conduct studies to investigate the semantic knowledge of the users of the loan language and how that semantic knowledge affects the denotation of the borrowed words of the donor language. Hence, this study aims to fill the gap mentioned above.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data selection

20 borrowed words of English used in Urdu are selected. The words are Train, Club, Clinic, Tip, Traffic, Engineer, Gas, Cycle, Party, Driver, Jacket, Company, Motor, Market, Glass, Hotel, Park, School, and Camera. These are the words that are frequently and commonly used by native speakers of Urdu. During the selection of the words, the familiarity-factor of the speakers with the borrowed words has been kept in view. Unknown words are avoided from selection.

3.2. Data Collection

A classroom of intermediate level of Govt. Gordon College Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan has been selected for the collecting data. 20 students of grade 12, whose medium of instruction as well as medium of education is English, both male and female of equal numbers aged 16-18 years have participated in the research activity. The participants are given a questionnaire containing the list of the selected borrowed words and their responses are recorded on that.

3.3. Research Design

The research is both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative method is used to present statistical data while close analysis of the data is presented through a qualitative approach.

3.4. Tools for analysis of data

The denotative meanings of the selected borrowed words have been collected with the help of Google's English Dictionaries provided by Oxford Languages⁷. The responses of the participants are recorded on the questionnaire containing selected borrowed words. Bloomfield's Theory of Semantic Changes has been utilized for the semantic-changes analysis whereas close analyses of the responses are conducted with the help of Thematic Analysis presented by Braun and Clark (2006).

3.4.1. Formula to calculate %'s

The following formula is applied to calculate the % of semantic loss:

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of denotative meanings for a borrowed word written by participants} \times 100}{\text{Total number of denotative meanings of the borrowed word}}$$

⁷ <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>

The semantic knowledge of the participants is calculated with the help of the following formula:

The accumulative number of responses of the participants for a borrowed word x100

Total number of expected responses for a borrowed word

4. Data Analysis

1. Borrowed Lexeme: Train

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** to teach or to train someone for something. **2.** Point or aim at someone, typically a gun or something. **3** Several packs of animals moving together. **4** Several vehicles moving together. **5** A gathering of people working together in collaboration.

Response from the Participants: 7 participants have responded the word to “Means of transport. 13 participants have responded to the word “means of transport and training.”

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: The Semantic knowledge of the participants has been recorded at 20% regarding this word.

Odd Response(s): Two participants responded oddly to this word as “experienced and educated Semantic.

Data Analysis: The data received in the form of responses from the participants reveal that the borrowed word has suffered from a semantic loss of 60%. Similarly, the data show that all the participants lag far behind in the meanings possessed by the word in the donor language. This lack of semantic knowledge of the participants of the loan language using the borrowed words affects the semantic range of the borrowed words.

2. Borrowed Lexeme: Club

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** an association dedicated to a particular interest or activity. **2** an organization constituted to play matches in a particular sport. **3** sum of money for a particular purpose **4.** A small, handled stick of wood.

Response from the Participants: 16 participants think that this word is used to refer to a place of partying or a place for specific

activity while 4 participants have added along with the 16 that this word is also used to refer to the sports organization.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the World: The data shows that the participants have very low semantic knowledge of a mere 30%.

Odd Response(s): Some participants think this word means “Group, academy, crew, playing card, and society.”

Data Analysis: The data, based on the responses, have shown that all the participants are unable to know the meanings of the borrowed word to the fullest. The word has undergone 50% semantic loss when the native speakers of the loan language have used this word. The ineptitude of the participants has narrowed the semantic range of the word of the donor language.

Also, this lack of semantic knowledge of the users of the loan language changes the meanings of the donor language.

3. Borrowed Lexeme: Clinic

Meaning in the donor language: 1. an establishment or hospital department where outpatients are given medical treatment or advice, especially of a specialist nature. 2. a conference or short course on a particular subject.

Response from the Participants: All the participants are of the view that the word “clinic” refers to something like a hospital or a place meant for medical services.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the word: The data show that the participants possess 50% semantic knowledge regarding the word “clinic”.

Odd Response(s): Some odd responses such as “local doctor, private space, experiment place, school” have also been recorded.

Data Analysis: The data in responses reveals that the participants have no clue about the full meanings of the words borrowed from another language. The word itself experiences 50% semantic loss which not only narrows down its semantic range but also gives new inaccurate meanings to the borrowed word.

4. Borrowed Lexeme: Tip

Meaning in the donor language: 1. the pointed or rounded end or extremity of something slender or tapering. 2. attach to or cover

the end or extremity of. **3.** (In bookbinding) apply a thin line of paste along the inner margin of a book to attach a single page, usually an illustration, to the page next to it. **4.** (informal) a small amount of money additionally given to the workers who serve people at various service areas such as hotels and restaurants

Response from the Participants: 12 participants see this word to mean only “amount of money given to people providing services at the workplaces. 4 participants also answered that the word also means “pointed tip of a writing pen”.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: On average, the semantic knowledge of the participants about the borrowed word “Tip” is recorded to be 25%.

Odd Response(s): There have been many odd responses from the participants. The majority of the participants term this word to mean “advice and edge of something.

Data Analysis: Not unlike the previous words, the lack of semantic knowledge of the participants has resulted in a 50% loss of semantic meanings of the word as well construction of completely new meanings of the words. The factors behind this transformation of the meanings can still be looked into, however.

5. Borrowed Lexeme: Traffic

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** a public-highway vehicle **2.** the messages or signals transmitted through a communications system **3.** deal or trade in something illegal

Response from the Participants: 10 participants have responded that this word means only “highway public traffic.”

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: The responses from the participants show that the participants have almost 17% semantic knowledge of the borrowed word “Traffic.”

Odd Response(s): 10 participants have responded to this word to mean “traffic jam/gridlock.”

Data Analysis: The responses of the participants show that none of the participants has complete semantic knowledge of the word “traffic.” Similarly, the responses imply that the participants have mostly used this word in social contexts being unaware of the real

meanings of the word. The word has suffered 67% semantic loss chiefly owing to its use in social contexts.

6. Borrowed Lexeme: Engineer

Meaning in the donor language: 1. a person who designs, builds, or maintains engines, machines, or structures. 2. a person who controls an engine, especially on an aircraft or ship 3. design and building (a machine or structure 4. skillfully arranging for (something) to occur

Response from the Participants: 11 participants have responded that this word means “a technical worker or qualified worker.”

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the word: The semantic knowledge of the participants is seen to be a touch over 14%.

Odd Response(s): 9 participants have responded that this word means ‘profession, post or occupation.’

Data Analysis: The recorded data show that none of the participants has thorough semantic knowledge of the borrowed words. As a result of the semantic inability of the participants, the semantic range of the word has been narrowed down by 75%. Moreover, the borrowed words seem to be associated with professions and contexts of the usage.

7. Borrowed Lexeme: Gas

Meaning in the donor language: 1. short form of gasoline 2. kill or harm by exposure to gas 3. talk excessively about trivial matters. 4. very amusing or entertaining

Response from the Participants: 19 participants have responded that this word means ‘gasoline’.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: The responses of the participant have shown that the participant possesses almost 24% semantic knowledge of the borrowed word ‘gas’.

Odd Response(s): 1 participant however has restricted this word only to ‘source of heat’ in response.

Data Analysis: All the participants have restricted this word to ‘gasoline’. None of the participants have responded to the other

denotative meanings of the word. The lack of semantic knowledge of the participants has resulted in 75% semantic loss of the meanings of the word.

8. Borrowed Lexeme: Cycle

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** A series of events that take place that is repeated regularly in the same way. **2.** a complete set/series **3.** A bicycle

Response from the Participants: All the participants have responded that this word means a bicycle used for riding on.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: The participants possess 33% semantic knowledge of this borrowed word.

Odd Response(s): No participant has shown any odd response.

Data Analysis: The data received from the participants shows that the participants don't possess complete knowledge of the borrowed word. This lack of semantic knowledge has narrowed down the semantic range of the word by 67%.

9. Borrowed Lexeme: Party

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** A gathering **2.** A group of politicians formed for contesting elections. **3.** Enjoyment through music at public gatherings

Response from the Participants: 7 participants have replied to it with a single word 'celebration' while 13 have responded to it to mean both 'celebration and political party.'

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: Through the replies from the participants, the participants have 55% semantic knowledge of these borrowed words.

Odd Response(s): None of the participants has shown any odd response.

Data Analysis: All the participants have responded in 1 or 2 meanings of the borrowed word in use. The most famous words of everyday use have been considered by the participants. The word has suffered from a 33% semantic loss when the borrowed word has been used by the native speakers of the loan language.

10. Borrowed Lexeme: Driver

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** An individual who controls the car or bus. **2.** The power supplying channels in a machinery.

Response from the Participants: All the participants have responded that this word means 'an individual who controls a car or a bus.'

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: The participants have 50% semantic knowledge of the borrowed word.

Odd Response(s): No participant has shown any odd response for the borrowed word 'driver.'

Data Analysis: All the participants have responded that the word 'driver' means the person who controls a car/bus. The semantic range of the word has been narrowed by 50% because of the lack of semantic knowledge of the borrowed word used by the native speakers of the loan language.

11. Borrowed Lexeme: Jacket

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** A garment used in winter to keep one's body warm. **2.** A covering of pipe. **3.** A small tray made of plastic is usually used for SIM in mobile phones.

Response from the Participants: All the participants have answered this word to be 'a piece of clothing used in winter to keep one's body warm.'

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: The average semantic knowledge recorded based on the responses from the participants is 33%.

Odd Response(s): No odd response is recorded in terms of word jacket.

Data Analysis: All the participants have responded to only one answer in the response of the word. In the process of use of the borrowed word by the participants, the word faced 67% semantic loss.

12. Borrowed Lexeme: Company

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** A commercial business **2.** the fact or condition of being with another or others, especially in a way that provides friendship and enjoyment **3.** associate with; keep company with

Response from the Participants: 14 participants have responded that this word means “both business and being with others especially friends while 6 of them have responded that this word means only company.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the World: Semantic knowledge of almost 57% is recorded.

Odd Response(s): No odd response is recorded in this word.

Data Analysis: Despite being a very common word in use, the word has undergone 34% semantic loss as none of the respondents have given three possible meanings of the selected borrowed word.

13. Borrowed Lexeme: Motor

Meaning in the donor language: 1. a device that provides motive power for a car or other moving object, particularly one that runs on electricity or internal combustion. 2. a car. 3. giving or producing motion or action travel in a motor vehicle. 4. Water drawing machine

Response from the Participants: 14 participants answered that this word means a ‘water drawing machine.’ 4 participants answered this to be ‘action travel motor’ alongside ‘water drawing machine’.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the word: Semantic knowledge of 27% is seen from the participants.

Odd Response(s): 2 participants have also responded it is an ‘engine’ due to its close association with the motor.

Data Analysis: The majority of the participants have confined the word just to one meaning while a small number of the participants have considered 2 meanings of the word. The rest of the 2 meanings are left by the participants which has resulted in 50% of semantic loss.

14. Borrowed Lexeme: Market

Meaning in the donor language: 1. a regular meeting place where goods, farm animals, and other commodities are purchased and sold. 2. a location or forum where deals in business take place 3. encourage or market something.

Response from the Participants: All participants have responded that this word means ‘area of sales and purchase of goods.’

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: The responses of the participants have shown that they have almost 33% semantic knowledge of the word.

Odd Response(s): No odd response is seen in this word.

Data Analysis: While all the participants have confined this word to the sale and purchase area, all other denotative meanings of the borrowed word are overlooked. The semantic range of the word has been narrowed by 67%.

15. Borrowed Lexeme: Glass

Meaning in the donor language. a drinking container made from a glass cover or enclosed with glass. **2.** (especially in hunting) scan (one's surroundings) with binoculars.

Response from the Participants: 19 participants have responded that this means 'a drinking container.'

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the word: The participants have shown semantic knowledge of 50%.

Odd Response(s): One participant however has answered that this word means 'sensitive material.'

Data Analysis: The other denotative meaning has been completely overlooked by the participants. This has resulted in a 50% semantic loss in the word.

16. Borrowed Lexeme: Hotel

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** A code word used in broadcasting that represents the letter H. **2.** A place where individuals and visitors can get food, housing, and other services.

Response from the Participants: All the participants have responded to this word to be 'a place where people go and eat and sometimes live as well.'

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: The semantic knowledge of the users of the donor language in this word is 50%.

Odd Response(s): No participant has shown any odd response.

Data Analysis: This word is used very commonly yet the participants have failed to achieve 100% semantic accuracy. This failure has caused the borrowed word 'Hotel' to suffer a 50% semantic loss.

17. Borrowed Lexeme: Park

Meaning in the donor language: 1. a large public park or recreational area. 2. a space allocated for a particular objective. 3. Put (something) in a useful location until needed.

Response from the Participants: 17 participants have responded that this borrowed word is a large public or recreational area.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: From the responses, 28% of semantic knowledge about the word is noticed.

Odd Response(s): Three participants have, however, responded that this borrowed word means 'to be a useful place'.

Data Analysis: Respondents know only that the word only means i.e. public garden and stop the car. The word has experienced a semantic loss of 66%. Two meanings other than 'a recreational place' have been either unknown or overlooked by the participants.

18. Borrowed Lexeme: School

Meaning in the donor language: 1. a facility for teaching youngsters. 2. convey to a school; instruct 3. train a horse to go over fences or on the flat. 4. Educated and Westernized (of a Xhosa). 5. a group of small fish gathered in the water

Response from the Participants: All the participants have responded to this word to mean a place of teaching or educating youngsters.

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: Based on the responses from the participants, semantic knowledge of 20% is recorded.

Odd Response(s): No odd response is recorded from any participant.

Data Analysis: All the participants have responded to only one meaning of the word. The rest of the meanings contained by the word are thoroughly unknown to the participants. This lack of semantic knowledge about the word has caused the borrowed word 80% semantic loss by narrowing down its range.

19. Borrowed Lexeme: Camera

Meaning in the donor language: 1. a device that records images visually as film, photos, or video signals

Response from the Participants: All the participants have responded that this word means 'a device used for making photos and recording videos.'

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: 100% semantic knowledge is shown by the participants.

Odd Response(s): No odd responses are recorded.

Data Analysis: This word has not suffered from any semantic loss in the light of responses shown by the participants.

20. Borrowed Lexeme: Ticket

Meaning in the donor language: **1.** A document or card that grants its bearer a specific privilege. **2.** a certificate or warrant **3.** issue (someone) with an official notice of a traffic offence. **4.** To have a travel ticket issued to them (the passenger)

Response from the Participants: All the participants have responded that this word 'means a document that permits entry somewhere.'

Average % of Semantic Knowledge of the Participants of the Word: Only 25% of semantic knowledge is seen in response to this word.

Odd Response(s): No odd response is observed during response recording.

Data Analysis: The lack of semantic knowledge of the participants has made the word suffer from 75% semantic loss which resulted in narrowing the semantic range of the borrowed word.

Table 1: Average % of Semantic Knowledge and Semantic Loss of the Selected Borrowed Words

S No	Borrowed Word	Semantic Knowledge	Semantic Loss
1	Train	20	60
2	Club	30	50
3	Clinic	50	50
4	Tip	25	50
5	Traffic	17	67
6	Engineer	14	75
7	Gas	24	75
8	Cycle	33	67
9	Party	55	33
10	Driver	50	50
11	Jacket	33	67

12	Company	57	34
13	Motor	27	50
14	Market	33	67
15	Glass	50	50
16	Hotel	50	50
17	Park	28	66
18	School	20	80
19	Camera	100	Zero
20	Ticket	25	75
21	Average	37.05	51.3

Table 1 above shows the average semantic knowledge of the participants and how that knowledge of the participants has made the borrowed word experience semantic loss. 20 selected borrowed words have experienced a 51.3% loss on average while the semantic knowledge of the users of loan language on average is found to be 37.05% on average.

5. Results and Discussion

During data analysis, the borrowed words with extensive denotative meanings have suffered more semantic loss and the least semantic knowledge is observed from the users of the loan language using these borrowed words. However, the borrowed words with a minimum range of denotative meanings are found to have suffered less semantic loss and maximum semantic knowledge of the users of the loan language has been observed.

In the same vein, there are certain borrowed words which integrated into the loan language in such a way that the users of the loan language don't have any idea that the words may have any additional meanings either. Mostly, the borrowed words are found to have been used for the functions they perform in the loan language not the whole range of denotations they contain.

Likewise, during data analysis, based on the data, it has been observed that users of the loan language have given odd responses to those borrowed words which either have 3 denotative meanings or the borrowed words used frequently and commonly in the everyday social settings of the speakers of the loan language.

In addition, the data has shown that the users of the loan language don't care about the denotative meanings of the borrowed word (s) as long as it keeps performing the needed function(s) of the users of the borrowed word(s).

Similarly, the data has shown that the users of the borrowed words are inclined to associate or identify the borrowed words with the social practices or the objects. The users don't have any other consideration while using the borrowed words. Not unlike, the users of the borrowed words normally consider those denotative meanings of the borrowed words that are excessively or closely used around them.

As the denotative range of the borrowed word increases in the donor language, the semantic knowledge of the users of the loan language decreases, and the semantic loss of the borrowed words increases. The users of the loan language sometimes use the borrowed word based on their social context. Owing to this, the complete denotative meanings of the borrowed word(s) are either ignored or they don't have full semantic knowledge of the borrowed word(s). Further, both or either of these possibilities affect the semantic range of the borrowed word(s). Not unlike this, the users associate semantic meanings of the borrowed words with professions and jobs. The words come to be associated with posts, education, and academic subjects.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted to find out the semantic knowledge of the selected English words borrowed in Urdu of students of intermediate level at Govt. Gordon College Rawalpindi and how the semantic knowledge of the participants affects the borrowed words. The first question was "What is the semantic knowledge of the students of intermediate level of the selected English borrowed words used in Urdu?" The data has shown that the users of the borrowed words have 37.05% average knowledge of the selected borrowed words. This means that the users of these selected borrowed words lag by 63% on average to the full denotative range of the borrowed words. The next question that the study was concerned with was How does the semantic knowledge of the students of intermediate level affect the selected English borrowed words used in Urdu?

In response to this question, the data shows that because of the lack of semantic knowledge of the users of the borrowed words, the borrowed words have suffered from two things: the semantic range of the words has been narrowed down from many to some and the words have experienced 51.3% semantic loss on average.

This study may pave the way for future researchers to find out the reasons behind this lack of semantic knowledge of the borrowed words particularly in English and in other languages in general. The factors that cause these semantic losses and reduce the semantic knowledge of the users of the borrowed words may also be investigated in posterity.

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