

ETYMOLOGY: WORDS THAT APPEARS IN THE LANGUAGE AND COMES FROM ANOTHER LANGUAGE AND ETYMOLOGICAL DOUBLETS

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Этимология: слова, появляющиеся в языке и приходящие из других языков, и этимологические дублеты

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the linguistic mechanisms behind etymology, loanwords, and etymological doublets, focusing on how languages develop through contact, borrowing, adaptation, semantic change, and historical convergence of word origins. Loanwords—lexical items adopted from one language into another—represent one of the most powerful forces behind vocabulary growth. Their phonological, morphological, and semantic integration illustrates the dynamic nature of linguistic evolution. Etymological doublets, which are pairs or groups of words sharing a common historical root but entering the language through different pathways, provide unique insights into language stratification, the chronology of borrowings, and semantic divergence. Through detailed analysis and examples from English (with occasional comparative notes from Russian and other languages), the article demonstrates how borrowed elements and their variants reflect cultural exchange, historical interactions, and internal linguistic restructuring.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье рассматриваются лингвистические механизмы, лежащие в основе этимологии, заимствований и этимологических дублетов, с акцентом на то, как языки развиваются благодаря контактам, заимствованию, адаптации, семантическим изменениям и исторической конвергенции словесных источников.

Заимствования — лексические единицы, переходящие из одного языка в другой — представляют собой одну из наиболее мощных движущих сил пополнения словарного состава. Их фонологическая, морфологическая и семантическая интеграция иллюстрирует динамичную природу языковой эволюции. Этимологические дублеты, то есть пары или группы слов, имеющие общий исторический корень, но попавшие в язык различными путями, дают уникальное представление о языковой стратификации, хронологии заимствований и семантическом расхождении. На основе детального анализа и примеров из английского языка (с отдельными сопоставительными замечаниями из русского и других языков) статья демонстрирует, как заимствованные элементы и их варианты отражают культурный обмен, исторические взаимодействия и внутренние процессы языковой реструктуризации.

Key words: etymology, loanword, borrowing, calque, semantic borrowing, language contact, linguistic adaptation, etymological doublets, historical linguistics, lexicon development, phonetic adaptation, morphological integration, semantic shift.

Ключевые слова: этимология, заимствованное слово, заимствование, калька, семантическое заимствование, языковой контакт, лингвистическая адаптация, этимологические дублеты, историческая лингвистика, развитие лексикона, фонетическая адаптация, морфологическая интеграция, семантический сдвиг.

Introduction

Etymology examines the origins and historical development of words, including their earliest meanings, structural changes, and pathways of transmission. Languages do not evolve in isolation: they influence each other through trade, conquest, religion, migration, literature, and science. As a result, a substantial proportion of any language's vocabulary consists of words that originated elsewhere.

Loanwords, far from being peripheral, often constitute some of the most fundamental elements of modern lexicons. English, for instance, has layers of borrowings from Norse, Latin, French, Greek, Arabic, Hindi, and many others. Russian, similarly, incorporates words from Old Church Slavonic, Turkic languages, German, Dutch, English, and French.

One of the most fascinating outcomes of long-term borrowing is the creation of etymological doublets—words that share a common ancestor but differ in form, meaning, or stylistic value due to being borrowed through different routes or in different historical periods.

This expanded article analyzes:

1. the mechanisms of borrowing,
2. adaptation processes,
3. typologies of loanwords,
4. the linguistic and cultural factors that shape them, and
5. the origins and significance of etymological doublets.

1. Loanwords: Definitions, Mechanisms, and Sociolinguistic Context

1.1. What Constitutes a Loanword?

A loanword is a lexical item adopted from another language. Unlike internal word formation (derivation, compounding), borrowing is an external process driven by cultural contact.

Loanwords can undergo:

- phonetic changes (altered sound shape),
- graphic changes (adaptation to alphabet or writing system),
- morphological integration (ability to form plurals, participles, derivatives),
- semantic modification (narrowing, broadening, specialization).

Loanwords are not merely linguistic additions; they offer evidence of historical connections between peoples.

1.2. Motivations for Borrowing

Languages borrow words for several reasons:

- Technological developments — internet, laser, smartphone.
- Scientific terminology — chlorophyll, neuron, algorithm.
- Religious influence — mosque, rabbi, icon, amen.
- Military contact — cannon, soldier, admiral.
- Culinary exchange — coffee, chocolate, yogurt, sushi.
- Prestige and fashion — boutique, haute couture, deluxe.

- Administrative or legal influence — often from Latin and French in English.

Borrowing often intensifies in periods of major cultural or political transformation, such as the Norman Conquest in England or Peter the Great's reforms in Russia.

2. Types of Borrowings

2.1. Direct Borrowings

These words are transmitted directly from the donor language with minimal mediation.

Examples:

- piano (Italian),
- tsunami (Japanese),
- kayak (Inuit).

2.2. Indirect Borrowings

These occur when a word passes through intermediate languages.

Examples:

- English apricot: Arabic → Spanish → English.
- Russian арбуз: Persian → Turkic → Russian.

Indirect borrowings often show changes at each stage of transmission.

2.3. Calques (Loan Translations)

Calques provide an important way to borrow concepts without importing foreign forms.

Examples:

- skyscraper → German Wolkenkratzer, French gratte-ciel.
- Russian мировоззрение ← German Weltanschauung.

Calquing reflects both contact and linguistic self-sufficiency.

2.4. Semantic Borrowings

Here, an already existing word acquires a new meaning due to influence from a foreign equivalent.

Example:

English star gained the sense “famous performer,” influenced by French étoile in theatrical language.

3. Adaptation Processes

Borrowed words rarely enter a language unchanged; they undergo systematic transformation.

3.1. Phonetic Adaptation

Loanwords are reshaped to match the sound system of the receiving language.

- English garage
→ pronounced differently in British and American English.
- Russian *офиса* ← English office; adapted to Russian phonotactics and case endings.

3.2. Morphological Integration

Loanwords eventually adopt local inflection and derivation patterns.

Examples:

- email → emails, emailing, emailed.
- Russian *сканер* → *сканировать* → *сканирование*.

3.3. Semantic Shifts

Borrowed words may change their meaning dramatically.

- Latin *captura* → English *capture* (to seize).
- Old French *chef* → English *chief* (leader) and *chef* (cook), now divergent.

These semantic changes can be the origin of etymological doublets.

4. Etymological Doublets

4.1. Definition

Etymological doublets are words in the same language that trace back to a common origin but differ due to separate borrowing events or different evolutionary pathways.

Doublets can arise from:

1. Borrowing at distinct historical periods
2. Borrowing through different intermediate languages
3. Borrowing coexisting with inherited forms
4. Borrowing of the same word but in multiple senses

4.2. Etymological Doublets in English

1. Chief – chef

Both from Old French *chef*, but borrowed separately.

2. Royal – regal – real

All from Latin *regalis*, through different stages of French and Latin influence.

3. Fragile – frail

Both from Latin *fragilis*.

4. Host – guest

Ultimately from Proto-Indo-European **ghosti-*, but diverged through Germanic vs Romance paths.

5. Cavalry – chivalry

Both from Old French *chevalerie*, relating to horses and knights, but specializing differently in English.

4.3. Etymological Doublets in Other Languages

Russian

1. верблюд – камила

Common Arabic source, different transmission routes.

2. отец – папа

Same Proto-Indo-European root *pa-*, but inherited vs borrowed.

3. голос – глас

Both from Proto-Slavic *golosъ*, but the second preserved only in Church Slavonic style.

Doublets illustrate how languages maintain parallel lexical layers rooted in different traditions.

5. Why Etymological Doublets Matter

Studying doublets allows researchers to:

- reconstruct patterns of historical language contact,
- trace phonological change,
- analyze semantic divergence,
- understand sociolinguistic stratification (prestige vs everyday vocabulary),
- examine how languages absorb and reinterpret foreign material.

Doublets offer insight into how languages layer meanings and evolve under cultural influence.

Conclusion

Etymology, loanwords, and etymological doublets provide valuable perspectives on the history of languages and their interactions. Borrowings reflect technological innovations, cultural exchange, conquest, religion, and social prestige. Doublets offer evidence of complex linguistic evolution, revealing how the same root can enter a language multiple times with distinct forms and meanings.

Together, these phenomena demonstrate the dynamic, interconnected nature of human languages, offering a window into human history and cultural development.

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