Abstract

Singapore is a country in which several languages come into contact on a regular basis, researching it's myriad of language contact phenomenon will provide much insight into current language contact theory.

The language pairs researched in this paper are Singaporean Hokkien (recipient language) and Malay (donor language), the focus of this paper is loanword *balu*. *balu* is chosen due to the fact that it underwent a semantic shift after it was borrowed into Singaporean Hokkien. This paper's main viewpoint is: The mechanism behind *balu*'s semantic shift is the same as meaning change among other non-loanwords, namely -- metaphorical and metonymical processes behind pragmatic inferencing.

Combining language contact theory and pragmatic inferencing theory with actual language data, we are able to describe the borrowing of *balu* diachronically. This paper reconstructed how early Singaporean Hokkien expressed the functions of *balu* before it was borrowed, suggested reasons
for the borrowing of *balu* and the language constraints present. It also looked at the semantic shift of *balu* and its effects on the lexicon. By combining both theory and data, we are also able to prove that the mechanism behind *balu*'s semantic shift is the same force (pragmatic inferencing) behind other semantic change.

More importantly, the study of Hokkien loanword *balu* has helped provide examples which support current language contact theory -- the interplay between social and linguistic factors is the driving force behind borrowing and of the two factors, social factors are the primary deciding force in borrowing.