

Italian and English Loanwords in Somali

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1. Preliminary Remarks on the Corpus

This is a preliminary report on a research in progress on Italian and English loanwords in Somali, which will eventually complement Zaborski's paper (1967) on loanwords of Arabic origin and/or mediation. As for now, the research has been mainly based on the total corpus of putative European loanwords entered in the *Dizionario Somalo-Italiano* (1985), directed by F. Agostini, A. Puglielli and Ciise Moxamed Siyaad, and amounting to more than 220 simple items (plus their derivative forms). The moderate size of this corpus is easily accounted for with the attitudes of the Dictionary team, not very prone to accept the vast amount of loanwords one finds in everyday interaction in Somalia, where foreign words are often displayed for snobbery or for stylistic purposes, without any strictly referential need.

However, this small corpus (which will be supplemented, in some cases, with other sources and with direct observation) seems to be adequate for some rough generalizations about the main trends of their phonological and morphological naturalization into the Somali language and for characterizing their distribution into different fields of human experience.

As the dictionary furnishes the lexical items in the standard Somali orthography as it is currently used, we are provided with accurate information on vowel quantity, but not often so on the position of accent and on the advanced vs. retracted quality of vowels. Therefore, our remarks on vowels will be very limited in scope.

2. Segmental Adjustments. Consonants

The differences between the consonant inventories of Italian/English and Somali are easily surmounted with the following adaptation rules, suffering few exceptions, which would deserve further study:

Plosives: I, E /p/ → S /b/

Ex. I *piantone* « guard » > *biyaantooni*; I *coperta* « blanket » > *kubeerto*; E *parliament* > *ba(a)rlam(m)aan*; E *sport* > *isboorti*;

Affricates: I /ts/, /ds/ → S /s/; I, E /tʃ/ → S/s/, (/dʒ/)

Ex. I *marzo* « march » > *maarso*; I *dolce* « cake » > *doolshe*, *doorshe*; I *cemento* « cement » > *shamiinto*; I *arancia* « orange » > *araanjo*;

Fricatives: I, E /v/ → /f/, /w/, (/b/ mainly with Arabic mediation); E/θ/ → /t/; E/ð/ → /d/; E /ʒ/ → /ʃ/

Ex. E *television* > *telefishen* / I *televisione* > *telefishoon*; E *savanna* / I *savana* > *safaana*; E *November* / I *novembre* > *No (o)fembar*; I *visita* « medical examination » > *wiisito*; I *cravatta* « collar tie » > *garawaati*; I *vapore* « steam (ship) » > *baabuur* « motor vehicle » (through Arabic);

E *thermos* > *tarmuus/termuus*;

E *television* > *telefishen*; E *garage* → *garaash*;

Nasals: I / / → /nj/; E /ŋ/ → /n/

Ex. I *ingegnere* « engineer » > *injinyeer*;

E *steering (wheel)* > *isteerin*; E *shilling* > *shilin*;

Liquids: I /ʎ/ → i /lj/

Ex. I *luglio* « July » > *Luulyo*

3. Segmental Adjustments. Vowels

The study of the adjustments of Vs is left to future research, because of two difficulties: (a) lack of detail in the *Dizionario*: the advanced vs. retracted nature of Vs is seldom given for loanwords; the position of accent is not always sure; (b) lack of information on the precise phonetic values of unstressed Vs (there seems to be much regional variation), which is also reflected in the many variants given in the *Dizionario*. A provisional generalization can be the following: vowels (no matter whether short or long) which are stressed in the source language usually result in a long V in Somali, as in: I *lògica* > *loojika*, I *cioccolàto/-a* « chocolate » > *shukulaato*, I *forchéttà* « fork » > *fargeeto*.

4. Sequential Adjustments: the Structure of the Syllable.

As it has been pointed out by Cardona 1981, (11-13), most phonotactic constraints have in Somali a syllabic basis. The only possible syllable types are the following:

['] V	C ₁ V
['] V C ₂	C ₁ VC ₂

The diffusion of glottal stop in front of an initial V remains to be ascertained (differences in style/formality or in geographical distribution?).

Position C₁ can be filled (Cardona 1981, 18-21) by 20 different Cs (i.e.: /b t d dh k g q j f s sh kh x c h m n l r/ and the glottal stop) plus the two glides (/w y/); V can be either short or long; position C₂ can be filled by 17 different Cs (as /k t m/ are excluded from this position; /dh/ → /r/ in CS dialects; /m/ is only permitted in /m\$m/ or /m\$b/ sequences) plus the two glides (thus forming diphthongs). As a consequence, when an unpermitted C appears in C₂ position in the underlying representation, it is linearized with the following rules: /t/ → /d/, /k/ → /g/, /m/ → /n/ and (CS dialects) /dh/ → /r/; this rule generally applies also to loanwords, as in *book* → *buug*, *note* → *nood*.

When a morpheme has the underlying structure | C₁V₁C₂C₃ |, C₂ and C₃ can not be linearized within the same syllable and if C₃ can not be resyllabified as C₁ of a following syllable (this happens if there is a following suffix beginning

in a V; the case of composition has not been thoroughly studied so far), there is epenthesis (= svarabhakti) of a V (usually the same as V₁), thus offering a nucleus to the extrasyllabic C₃. E.g. the root |ark| « to see » has forms such as /ar\$ kay/ « I saw; he saw », where /k/ is attached to the nucleus of the following syllable, and /a\$rag\$stay/ « you saw; she saw », where an extra-syllable is the result of epenthesis, following the rule:

$$\emptyset \rightarrow V / - \left\{ \begin{array}{c} C \\ \# \end{array} \right\}$$

where V is copied from the V of the lexical morpheme; besides, /k/ → /g/ syllable-finally.¹ As in such Somali clusters one of the Cs must be a liquid, this kind of context is not very frequent in loanwords, as in *meter* → *mitir* (pl. *mitirro*), and not **mid-ro* as one might have expected), *liter* > *liitir* (pl. *liitirro*).

5. Morphophonological Conditionings at Word Level

5.0. Therefore, in true Somali words, C clusters can only belong to two different morphemes, except in the case of resyllabification. So that in a sequence ...C₂\$C₁ ..., we have the following possibilities:

(1) C₂\$C₁+V (resyllabification, just examined); the limitations in the inventory of C₂ and C₁ in such cases deserves further study; it seems, however, that C₂ is usually a liquid;

(2) C₂+C₁, where C₂ is the final of a lexical morpheme and C₁ the initial of an inflectional morpheme and + is an inflectional boundary; we know from Cardona 1981 that in this case C₁ cannot be but /k t n s/ (the glide /y/ must be added to the list), with minor exceptions in case of C assimilation, at least in some varieties;

(3) C₂ # C₁, where # is a boundary between a lexical morpheme and a derivational one; from a check in Puglielli 1984, passim, and Caney 1984, (289-305), we see that derivational suffixes only add /l/ and /sh/ as possible C₁;

(4) C₂ # C₁, where # is a compounding boundary; from the list of Caney 1984, (306-308), we deduce that those words which are most frequently used as a second element of a compound can begin with every syllable-initial C, without any apparent limitation.

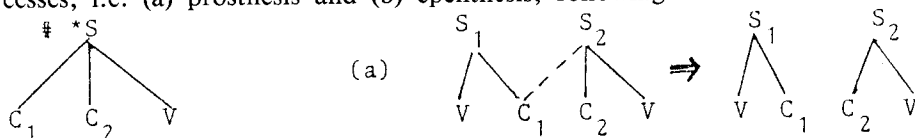
We deduce from this list that there are no other possible clusters, and therefore;

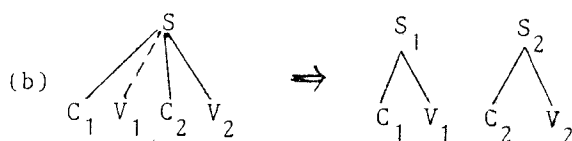
(5) *# # C₁C₂ ... and

(6) *... C₁C₂# #,

very frequent in foreign words, are unpermitted clusters and can not be linearized as such. They must be eliminated either through some sort of resyllabification or simplified with the deletion of one C. The operation of these processes is better seen in relationship with the position the cluster has in the word.

5.1. *Word-initial clusters.* In this position we usually have syllable-creating processes, i.e. (a) prosthesis and (b) epenthesis, following the schemes:





Prosthesis takes place only in case of /sC/ initial clusters: e.g.: *sport* > *is\$boorti*, *stadio* > *is\$stadiyo*, *slogan* > *is\$loogan*; in the other cases we have epenthesis. The epenthetic V is mainly copied from the nuclear V of the adjacent syllable, as in, e.g., I *blocchetto* > *bulukeeti* « little cement block », I *professore* > *bar(a)fasoor*, *glass* > *galaas*, *gramme* / I *grammo* > *garaamme*; *frigidaire* > *firi-jider/-ter*; exceptions, due to the labializing effect of /b/, can be found in: *brush* > *buraash* or in I *placcato* « plated » > *bulakaati*; other exceptions are probably to be explained with neutralization in unaccented syllables.

5.2. *Word-internal clusters.* Many loanwords have, in their source language, word-internal clusters, but these clusters can hardly fulfil the Somali morphophonological conditions listed above in 5.0. I. e., as there are both in Italian and English many polysyllabic morphemes (or sequences of two or more morphemes which are not easily segmented by Somali speakers), C clusters do not often belong to two different morphemes. As a consequence, there is some doubt whether, in a sequence ... C₂\$C₁ ..., C₁ must belong to the list of Cs permitted at the beginning of a grammatical morpheme (be it inflectional or derivational, see above, 5.0, cases (2) and (3)), or can belong to the larger inventory of permitted word-initial Cs (see 5.0, case (4)).

The initial Cs of the syllables preceded in the following examples by the sign \$, seem to meet conditions (2) and (3): I *coperta* « blanket » > *kubeer\$to*, I *carta bollata* « stamped paper » > *kaar\$tabol\$laato*; I *marzo* « March » > *maar\$so*.

There seems to be, however, also an extension of possible C₁s to Cs that do not belong to the list of (2) and (3) (/k t n s sh l y/), but have slight differences either in force or place or articulation, i.e. /b d g m f/ are also attested. Ex. I *carburo* > *kar\$buuno* « lamp », I *giardino* « garden » > *jar\$diino*; E/I *germ(e)* > *jeer\$mi*.

On the contrary, when the candidate C₁ is a liquid, this C is not permitted and therefore we have V epenthesis, with two different procedures:

(a) copying of adjacent vowel, as in: I *disciplina* > *dishibiliin*; E *control* > *kontorool*, I *padre* « priest » > *baadari*; E *microphone* > *maggarofoon*;

(b) use of the neutral vowel /a/ (the exact value of which and its relationship with [±ATR] feature remains to be ascertained); ex.: I *complesso* « complex » > *kombaleeso*.

However, there are also signs of a possible relaxation of these restrictions, as the *Dizionario* lists words either with alternative consonants or with and without V epenthesis, as in the cases of: E, I, (A?) *democratic(o)* > *dimugraadi/demokaraati* (is it a question of different sources, e.g. E/I vs. Arabic?); I *contrabbando* « smuggling » > *kont(a)rabaan*; there are even words having no adaptation at all, such as: E *diplomacy* > *diblomaasi*; E/I *April(e)* > *Abriil*; I *febbraio* « February » > *Febraayo*; I *nastro* > *naastro* « cassette recorder »; E *microscope* / I *microscopio* > *mikroskoob*. All such words are in some way not completely assimilated to the Somali (morpho)phonological constraints; they only underwent minimal adap-

tations (e.g. segmental adjustments, see above, 2. and 3.), but still present non-native clusters. Is this to be interpreted as a sign of dependence on the orthography (and phonology) of the source language, or does this mirror a partially assimilated pronunciation of learned words, at least in educated people?

It would seem that this relaxation of the rules against C clusters takes place more easily word-internally, than word-initially or -finally. At any rate, the true popular pronunciation of these forms should be more nativizing. Are we faced with an ongoing trend of rule changing, under the pressure of loanwords, and starting from educated people?

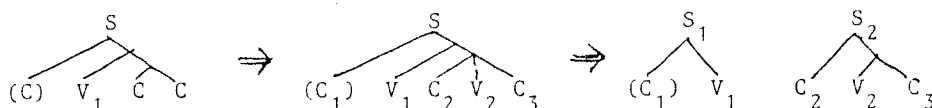
5.3. *Word-final clusters*. No C cluster is admitted in this position. Different processes are at work for the regularization of syllable structure:

(1) Syllable-creating processes:

(a) V epenthesis:

$\emptyset \rightarrow V_2 / C_1 - C_2 \# \#$

I. e., in syllabic terms:

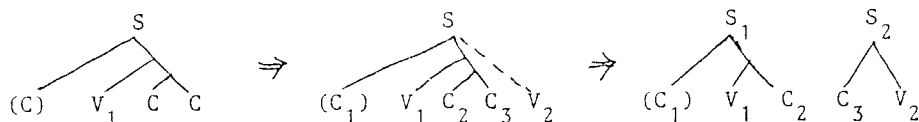


Where V_2 is mainly /i/. Ex.: *science* > *saynis* « (natural) science » (as opposed to *cilmi* « (human) science »), *telex* > *telekis*.

(b) epithesis:

$\emptyset \rightarrow V_2 / C_1 C_2 - \# \#$

I. e., in syllabic terms:



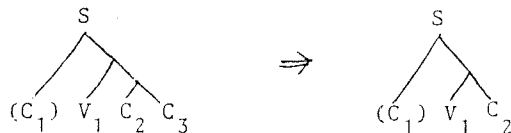
where V_2 is /i/, or some other vowel justified by morphological motivations. Ex.: E *tank* > *taan\$gi*, E *yard* > *yaar\$di*, E *cent* > *sen\$ti/san\$ti*, E *sport* > *is\$boor\$ti*;

(2) Syllable-regularizing process:

(c) final C deletion:

$C_3 \emptyset / C_2 - \# \#$

I. e.:



Ex. E *record* > *rikoor*; E *list* > *liis*; E *sergent* > *saajin*; E (driving) *licence* > *leysin*;

6. Morphological Motivation

The modalities of morphological integration of loanwords will be studied in the future. In many instances phonological adaptation seem to prevail over correspondence in morphological class (e.g. in gender) between the source and the target language. E.g., Italian words ending both in *-o* (masculine) and in *-a* (feminine) are usually adapted into Som. *-o* (f.), as in *salotto* (m.) « living-room » → *salooto* (f.), *ferro (da stiro)* (m.) « (flat-)iron » → *feero* (f.), *forchetta* (f.) « fork » → *fargeeto* (f.), *agenda* (f.) → *ajeendo* (f.). Departures from a strict phonological adaptation in a direction of morphological motivation seem to be less frequent: e.g. I *mandarino* (m.) « tangerine » → *mandariin* (m.) and not **mandariino* (f.), etc. Doublets of E and I origin are by no means rare, as in: I *farmacia* → *farmashiye* and E *pharmacy* → *farmasi*; in some cases it is not easy to detect which is the source language: I/E *trac(h)oma* → *tarakoomo*. In some other instances where the plural form points to Italian and the singular one to E, it is not easy to decide whether both languages are really involved and which is the primary form: see, e.g., the case of *siminaar*, pl. *siminaaryo*, where the sing. reminds E and the pl. I. There seem to be no major limitation to full derivational and inflectional productivity of loanwords. Whole derivative sets are already entered in the dictionary, as in the case of *baraafuun* (← I *profumo* « perfume », *dimuqraadi* « democratic » or *buraash* (← *brush*).

7. Semantic Considerations

Even if loanwords have been sparingly entered into the *Dizionario Somalo-Italiano*, they cover many different fields of human experience and thus show the kind of impact Western civilization has had on Somalia. We might classify these fields as follows (figures put together variant forms):

— usual objects (tools, pieces of furniture, etc.):	37 items
— social and political organization:	26 items
— weights and measures:	25 items
— culture and science:	22 items
— health:	17 items
— food and drinks:	15 items
— vehicles and transportation:	13 items
— military:	12 items
— house and building:	10 items
— games and sports:	9 items
— techniques:	9 items
— clothing:	7 items
— substances:	6 items

8. Conclusion

The many problems involving loanwords in the Somali language have been reviewed here, though with special stress on phonology. Further study will give a wider orientation to the setting up of a consistent policy in adopting and adapting foreign words. Linguists are supposed to offer the tools which are necessary

for this purpose, even if they know well that the ultimate judges are the native speakers, who decide whether a certain loanword has to be kept or substituted with a native neologism or with another loan, or whether the most frequently used rules have to be applied to a certain word or not. If, however, a certain regularity in the pattern of adaptation of loanwords can be achieved, this will be a good service to the development of the Somali language.

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¹ The analysis of this alternation in terms of epenthesis is still provisional and disputable. It is easily acceptable when $V_1 = V_2$. There are, however, cases where $V_1 \neq V_2$, which are better explained in terms of V deletion (ex. among the nouns: xárig « rope », pl. xarkó; or among the verbs: furan-/furm- « to be open »). Other cases can be found in Banti 1985. So far for inflectional morphology. The deletion approach seems to be more likely in derivational morphology (Puglielli 1984).