
Abstract:
Extensive support for a preference for monosyllabicity in Hong Kong Cantonese has been found. Monosyllabicity appears to facilitate transference of monosyllabic English words (MEWs) into Cantonese. In a corpus of informal writing collected from Hong Kong Chinese newspaper columns (mid-1990s), roughly 1 in 4–5 unintegrated insertions (Muysken 2000) is monosyllabic. The findings support Clyne’s (2003) theory of facilitation – an extension of his earlier postulation of ‘triggering’ (Clyne 1967, 1980), which explains why transference of linguistic (phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, etc.) features tends to be facilitated if such features are shared in the languages within the plurilingual’s repertoire. In this study, MSH will be examined by investigating the extent to which MEWs are transferred into Japanese and Korean. The results will help us calibrate MSH vis-à-vis MEW data in two Altaic languages unrelated to Cantonese. Implications for Clyne’s (2003) theoretical framework of ‘facilitation of transference’ will be discussed.