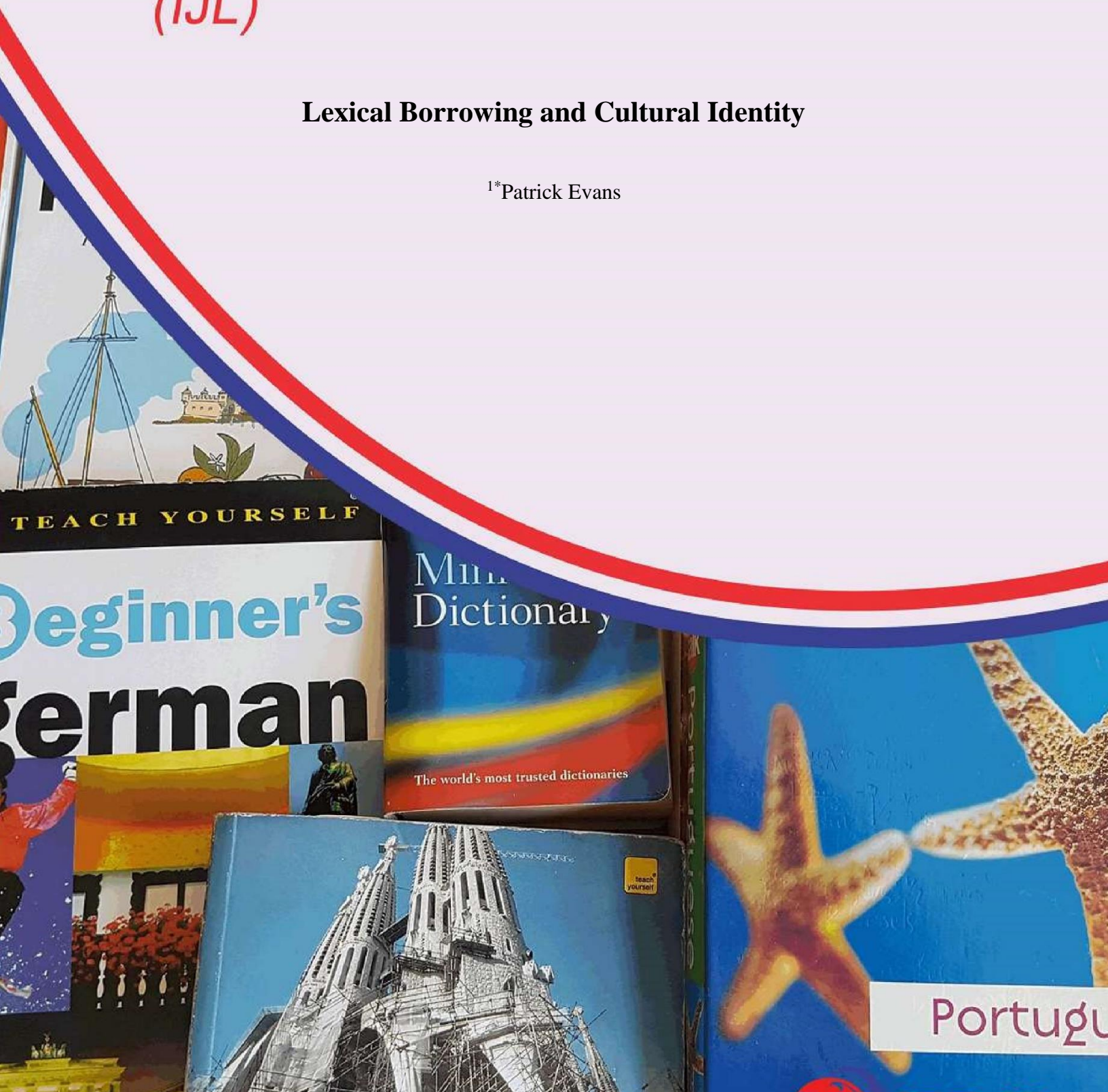


# International Journal of Linguistics (IJL)

## Lexical Borrowing and Cultural Identity

<sup>1</sup>\*Patrick Evans





## Lexical Borrowing and Cultural Identity



<sup>1\*</sup>Patrick Evans

Strathmore University

---

### Article History

*Received 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2024*

*Received in Revised Form 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025*

*Accepted 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025*



### Abstract

**Purpose:** The general objective of this study was to examine how the use of borrowed words affects or reflects people's cultural identity.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to lexical borrowing and cultural identity. Preliminary empirical review revealed that lexical borrowing is a key process that reflects the evolving nature of cultural identity in a globalized world. It allows individuals and communities to adapt to external influences while maintaining elements of their indigenous identity.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The study recommended that linguistic theory incorporate a more sociocultural perspective on lexical borrowing, acknowledging its role in identity formation. Policymakers were advised to support bilingual or multilingual education, ensuring that language preservation was prioritized alongside the adoption of global lexicons.

**Keywords:** *Lexical Borrowing, Cultural Identity, Language Policy, Sociolinguistics, Language Preservation*

*Z13, J24, I23, O19, F15*

©2025 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



## INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity is a multifaceted construct that encapsulates an individual's sense of belonging to a particular culture or group, influenced by factors such as ethnicity, language, religion, and shared traditions. It serves as a lens through which individuals interpret their experiences and interactions, significantly impacting behaviors, values, and perceptions. This identity is not static; it evolves over time, shaped by personal experiences and societal changes. Understanding cultural identity is crucial for fostering social cohesion, informing policy-making, and enhancing intercultural relations (Cultural Atlas, n.d.; de Oliveira, da Silva, & dos Santos, 2020).

In the United States, the landscape of cultural identity has become increasingly complex due to significant demographic shifts. The 2020 U.S. Census reported that approximately 33.8 million individuals identified as multiracial, a notable increase from previous decades. This surge reflects changing societal attitudes and a broader recognition of mixed heritage. Additionally, a 2015 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 60% of multiracial adults are proud of their mixed-race background, and 59% believe their racial heritage has made them more open to other cultures. These statistics underscore a growing acknowledgment and acceptance of diverse cultural identities within the American populace (Pew Research Center, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

The United Kingdom exhibits a similarly complex cultural identity landscape, influenced by its colonial history and patterns of immigration. According to the 2011 Census conducted by the Office for National Statistics, 14% of the population in England and Wales identified as belonging to a non-White ethnic group, with significant increases in individuals identifying as Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups. However, national pride has seen a decline; the British Social Attitudes survey reported that in 2013, 86% of respondents were proud of Britain's history, but this figure fell to 64% by 2023. Similarly, only 53% expressed pride in Britain's democratic system, down from 69% in 2013, indicating shifting perceptions of national identity. These trends suggest a nation grappling with its evolving cultural composition and historical narratives (Office for National Statistics, 2012; NatCen Social Research, 2023).

Japan's cultural identity is deeply rooted in traditions and social structures, yet it is experiencing shifts due to modernization and globalization. Common cultural themes include a strong sense of group belonging, politeness, and humility. However, research indicates a rise in individualism; a study analyzing family structures from 1947 to 2015 found an increase in nuclear families and a decline in multi-generational households, suggesting a move towards more individualistic lifestyles. Despite these changes, Japan maintains a rich cultural heritage, with U.S. News & World Report ranking it as having the highest cultural influence in Asia and fourth worldwide in 2023. This juxtaposition of tradition and modernity reflects the dynamic nature of Japan's cultural identity (ResearchGate, 2018; Cultural Atlas, n.d.).

Brazil's cultural identity is characterized by its diverse population and history of racial mixing. According to the 2022 Census, 45.3% of Brazilians identified as mixed race (*pardo*), surpassing the 43.5% who identified as white. This marks a shift from 2010, where 47.7% identified as white and 43.1% as mixed race. The increase in individuals identifying as mixed race reflects a growing acknowledgment of Brazil's multicultural heritage. Additionally, initiatives like São Paulo Fashion Week's 2020 mandate for at least 50% of models to be of African, Indigenous, or Asian descent



highlight efforts to address racial representation and celebrate cultural diversity in the fashion industry. These developments underscore Brazil's ongoing journey toward embracing and promoting its rich cultural mosaic (IBGE, 2023; Vogue Business, 2020).

African countries present a rich tapestry of cultural identities, with over 1.2 billion people across more than 3,000 ethnolinguistic groups. This diversity is both a strength and a source of complexity in fostering national unity. The African Union emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage in achieving the continent's developmental goals, advocating for the preservation and promotion of cultural values. However, challenges such as political tensions and conflicts often arise from the interplay of cultural identity and resource control. For instance, in Nigeria, the coexistence of multiple ethnic groups has led to both rich cultural exchanges and inter-ethnic tensions, illustrating the delicate balance between diversity and unity. Recognizing and respecting this diversity is essential for fostering inclusive and harmonious societies across the continent (African Union, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

Migration significantly influences cultural identity, as seen in the experiences of African immigrants in the United States. The African immigrant population in the U.S. increased from 816,000 in 2000 to about 2.1 million in 2015. These immigrants often strive to retain their cultural values while integrating into American society, balancing dual identities and contributing to the multicultural fabric of their new environment. This duality can lead to unique challenges, such as navigating cultural misunderstandings and combating stereotypes, but also offers opportunities for cultural enrichment and cross-cultural understanding within their communities (Pew Research Center, 2015).

In Brazil, the resurgence of quilombos—communities originally formed by escaped enslaved Africans—illustrates the reclamation of cultural identity to combat contemporary racial injustices. Urban Black communities are forming modern quilombos as cultural and political hubs to address systemic racism and economic disparities. This movement reflects a collective effort to preserve cultural heritage and foster social resilience. For example, in the aftermath of devastating floods in Porto Alegre, these quilombos have played a crucial role in providing support and relief to affected Black populations, highlighting the enduring significance of these communities in Brazil's socio-cultural landscape (de Oliveira, da Silva, & dos Santos, 2020; The Guardian, 2024).

The fashion industry in Brazil has also taken steps to address cultural representation. São Paulo Fashion Week's implementation of a quota requiring at least 50% of models to be of African, Indigenous, or Asian descent aims to rectify the underrepresentation of these groups. This initiative signifies a broader commitment to embracing and showcasing the nation's diverse cultural identity. By enforcing such measures, the fashion industry not only brings visibility to historically marginalized communities but also contributes to reshaping the narrative of what is considered beautiful and representative of Brazil. This paradigm shift within fashion reflects a deeper societal recognition of the value in cultural identity and heritage. Moreover, such initiatives may influence similar reforms in other sectors such as media, education, and governance, reinforcing the role of inclusive representation in societal development. As these platforms elevate diverse voices, they



foster a richer, more equitable national identity that embraces the full spectrum of Brazil's multicultural heritage (Vogue Business, 2020).

Lexical borrowing, the process by which one language adopts words from another, serves as a testament to the dynamic nature of linguistic evolution and cultural interaction. This phenomenon is not merely about filling lexical gaps; it embodies the intricate socio-cultural exchanges between communities. When speakers incorporate foreign terms, they often reflect underlying historical events, trade relations, or shifts in societal values. For instance, the Swahili language has integrated numerous Arabic words due to prolonged trade and cultural exchanges along the East African coast, illustrating how languages evolve through contact and mutual influence (Hassan, 2023).

The motivations behind lexical borrowing are multifaceted. Beyond the need to name new objects or concepts, borrowing can result from the prestige associated with the source language or the socio-economic dominance of its speakers. In multilingual settings, minority language speakers might adopt terms from a dominant language to facilitate communication or gain social mobility. This dynamic is evident in the Lukabarar-speaking community in Kenya, where speakers incorporate Nandi terms into their vernacular, reflecting the socio-linguistic pressures of their environment (Sasala, Alati, & Mudogo, 2019).

Lexical borrowing significantly impacts cultural identity by embedding foreign elements into the linguistic fabric of a community. This integration can symbolize openness to external influences or, conversely, highlight power imbalances between cultures. The adoption of English terms in Gĩkũyũ, a Bantu language of Kenya, underscores the enduring effects of British colonialism and the complex interplay between language and identity in post-colonial societies (Njagi, 2016). The domains from which words are borrowed often shed light on a culture's priorities and areas of external influence. In Kihehe, a Bantu language spoken in Tanzania, loanwords predominantly pertain to technology, governance, and education, sectors where external influence has been significant. This pattern reflects the community's adaptive strategies in response to globalization and modernization (Kasavaga & Alphonse, 2022).

Semantic changes frequently accompany lexical borrowing, as borrowed terms may undergo shifts in meaning to align with the cultural and contextual nuances of the adopting language. In Swahili, several Arabic loanwords have experienced semantic broadening or narrowing, illustrating how languages mold foreign lexemes to fit indigenous conceptual frameworks (Hassan, 2023). Beyond semantics, the phonological and morphological integration of loanwords reveals the depth of linguistic assimilation. In Lunyore, a Bantu language in Kenya, borrowed Dholuo terms are adapted to conform to native phonetic and grammatical structures, demonstrating the language's resilience and flexibility in maintaining its identity amidst external influences (Ochilo, 2018).

The social implications of lexical borrowing are profound. The deliberate use of loanwords can serve as markers of social identity, group membership, or even socio-economic status. Speakers might employ foreign terms to project modernity, align with global trends, or distinguish themselves within their community. This phenomenon underscores the intricate relationship between language choice and social dynamics (Zenner, Rosseel, & Calude, 2019). However, extensive borrowing can pose challenges to linguistic purity and raise concerns about language preservation. The infusion of numerous loanwords might lead to language shift or endangerment,



especially for minority languages. In multilingual regions, the dominance of certain languages can pressure smaller linguistic communities to assimilate, potentially eroding their linguistic heritage (Sasala et al., 2019).

On the other hand, borrowing can enrich a language, enhancing its expressive capacity and reflecting a community's adaptive strategies in a globalized world. The incorporation of foreign terms can facilitate cross-cultural communication and understanding, fostering a more inclusive linguistic landscape. For instance, the adoption of English technological terms into various African languages enables speakers to engage with global innovations while retaining their linguistic identity (Kasavaga & Alphonse, 2022). Lexical borrowing is a complex phenomenon that intertwines linguistic evolution with cultural identity. It reflects historical interactions, socio-economic dynamics, and the continuous negotiation of identity within and between communities. Understanding the nuances of lexical borrowing offers valuable insights into the resilience and adaptability of languages and the cultures they represent.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Lexical borrowing, the process by which one language adopts words from another, has become increasingly prominent in multilingual societies shaped by globalization, migration, and digital communication. While this phenomenon reflects linguistic adaptability and cultural interaction, it also raises concerns about the implications for cultural identity, especially in communities where indigenous languages are under threat. According to a UNESCO (2021) report, over 40% of the world's estimated 7,000 languages are endangered, primarily due to the dominance of global languages like English, Spanish, and Mandarin, which often serve as sources of borrowed lexicon. This reality suggests that lexical borrowing is not only a linguistic occurrence but also a sociocultural one with potential ramifications for cultural preservation and expression. Despite its prevalence, there is a limited understanding of how lexical borrowing influences the construction, negotiation, or erosion of cultural identities across different societies. As borrowed terms penetrate everyday discourse, there is a need to examine whether they reinforce cultural hybridity, signal social mobility, or lead to the dilution of linguistic heritage (UNESCO, 2021).

The existing body of research has largely concentrated on the mechanics and patterns of lexical borrowing—such as phonological integration, semantic shifts, and syntactic adaptations—without adequately exploring its cultural implications, particularly the nuanced relationship between borrowed vocabulary and identity formation. Although scholars like Zenner, Rosseel, and Calude (2019) have examined the social meanings behind borrowed words, there remains a gap in comprehensively analyzing how these lexical incorporations influence self-perception, group identity, and intergenerational communication within specific cultural contexts. Most studies tend to focus on either structural linguistic aspects or broad sociolinguistic patterns without anchoring their analysis in the lived cultural experiences of speakers. Furthermore, empirical studies that compare lexical borrowing across regions or languages in relation to identity are scarce, especially in the African context. This study seeks to address these gaps by linking lexical borrowing directly with cultural identity, exploring how communities interpret, adapt, and internalize foreign lexicon within their cultural frameworks (Zenner, Rosseel & Calude, 2019).



The findings of this study will benefit multiple stakeholders, including linguists, educators, policymakers, and cultural preservationists. For linguists and sociolinguists, the research will provide deeper insights into the socio-cultural drivers and consequences of lexical borrowing, advancing theoretical understanding of language-culture dynamics. Educators and curriculum developers can leverage these findings to design language instruction that respects linguistic diversity while fostering cultural awareness. Policymakers concerned with language preservation and cultural heritage will gain empirical evidence to support inclusive language policies that balance modernization with identity preservation. Additionally, minority language speakers and cultural advocates will find in this study a framework to understand and negotiate their evolving identities in increasingly pluralistic societies. By foregrounding the cultural implications of lexical borrowing, this research empowers communities to critically reflect on their linguistic choices and cultural narratives in a rapidly globalizing world (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 2019).

## **2.0 LITERATUR REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1.1 Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Linguistic Relativity Theory)**

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, also known as the theory of linguistic relativity, posits that the structure and vocabulary of a language influence the speaker's worldview and cognition. This theory was advanced by Edward Sapir and further developed by his student Benjamin Lee Whorf in the early 20th century. The central premise of this theory is that language is not just a tool for communication but a shaper of thought and cultural perception. According to this perspective, the way people perceive and conceptualize their experiences is profoundly affected by the linguistic categories and structures available in their native tongue. In the context of lexical borrowing, the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis becomes highly relevant because it allows us to explore how the incorporation of foreign lexical items into a language could reshape cultural identity and influence the perception of borrowed concepts. For example, when Swahili speakers adopt English terms for modern technology or governance, they may begin to conceptualize these domains in a new light, which aligns with Western ideologies or systems. This linguistic adaptation could result in cultural hybridization, where speakers maintain their indigenous identities while simultaneously accommodating external cultural influences. The theory suggests that borrowing is not merely a linguistic act but also a cognitive and cultural one, where meanings are renegotiated and identities are redefined (Lucy, 2016). This makes the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis a critical theoretical framework for analyzing how language contact and borrowing reflect and reshape cultural identities.

#### **2.1.2 Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)**

Developed by Howard Giles in the 1970s, the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) provides a socio-psychological framework for understanding how individuals modify their language and communicative behaviors during social interactions. The theory posits that speakers adjust their speech—either converging or diverging—based on social identity, context, or the desire to align with or distance themselves from others. In lexical borrowing, this theoretical lens is particularly potent for analyzing why speakers of a minority language may incorporate words from a dominant language. Convergence in this context reflects a form of social alignment or



aspiration, where borrowed lexemes are used to enhance mutual intelligibility, achieve upward social mobility, or integrate into a more dominant cultural group. Conversely, divergence might involve the selective borrowing of terms that preserve ethnic identity while resisting total assimilation. For example, in multilingual African societies, speakers may borrow English or French terms for administrative and educational functions while retaining indigenous words for cultural or familial contexts. This dual linguistic behavior reveals how individuals negotiate their cultural identities through lexical choices. CAT thus frames lexical borrowing as a dynamic interaction between identity preservation and social adaptability, illustrating that the act of borrowing is deeply rooted in identity management and group dynamics (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 2019).

### **2.1.3 Cultural Identity Theory (CIT)**

Cultural Identity Theory, developed by Mary Jane Collier and Milt Thomas in the 1980s, focuses on the interplay between communication and cultural identity, asserting that identity is co-constructed through communicative acts. According to CIT, cultural identity is not static but fluid, emerging in the process of interaction with others and influenced by the sociocultural environment. This theory underscores the idea that individuals possess multiple cultural identities that are activated depending on context, discourse, and the interlocutor. Lexical borrowing serves as one of the communicative tools through which these identities are expressed and negotiated. For instance, when bilingual individuals incorporate loanwords in conversation, they may be signaling affiliation with a particular cultural group, expressing hybridity, or demonstrating linguistic competence. In globalized urban centers such as Nairobi, Johannesburg, or São Paulo, borrowed words often become markers of cosmopolitan identity, especially among youth who blend local dialects with global lexicons in music, fashion, and digital communication. Cultural Identity Theory is, therefore, instrumental in examining how the use of borrowed lexicon reflects shifts in identity construction and community belonging. By framing lexical borrowing as a performative and identity-driven act, CIT provides valuable insights into how language choices serve as a bridge between personal identity and collective cultural narratives (Collier, 2015).

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

Zenner, Rosseel, and Calude (2019) explored the social meaning potential of loanwords in multilingual societies, particularly focusing on how lexical borrowing reflects and expresses social identity. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with speakers of various languages and quantitative analysis of language corpora. Participants were from diverse linguistic backgrounds in Europe and Africa. They used both sociolinguistic surveys and discourse analysis to investigate how speakers used borrowed lexicon in specific social contexts. The study found that lexical borrowing not only reflects but also actively constructs social identity. Loanwords were often used to signify social alignment with dominant groups, such as the use of English terms in post-colonial African contexts. However, in some cases, lexical borrowing also represented resistance to cultural assimilation, where speakers borrowed words in a manner that showcased their hybridity or distinction from the mainstream culture. The authors recommended further studies on the role of loanwords in identity formation, especially in post-colonial societies, and suggested that language policies should account for the role of lexical borrowing in shaping national and ethnic identities.



Njagi (2016) investigated the impact of English lexical borrowing on the cultural identity of speakers of Gĩkũyũ, a Bantu language spoken in Kenya. The study employed a qualitative research design, with in-depth interviews conducted among Gĩkũyũ speakers from urban and rural areas. Discourse analysis was used to analyze how the integration of English words in Gĩkũyũ conversation affected participants' cultural identity. The study revealed that English lexical borrowings in Gĩkũyũ were perceived as markers of social status and modernity. Urban speakers, in particular, were found to incorporate English terms to align themselves with global trends. Conversely, rural speakers expressed resistance to these borrowings, associating them with cultural erosion. The study suggested that language educators in Kenya should promote the preservation of indigenous languages while acknowledging the role of globalization in shaping language use.

Ochilo (2018) explored the effect of lexical borrowing from Dholuo on Lunyore, a Bantu language spoken in Western Kenya, and its implications for cultural identity. A qualitative ethnographic approach was used, with participant observation and semi-structured interviews conducted among Lunyore speakers. The study focused on different age groups to analyze how lexical borrowing varies across generations and its impact on cultural identity. The study found that younger generations of Lunyore speakers used more Dholuo borrowings, which they associated with urbanization and social prestige. Older generations, however, maintained a purist approach to the language, viewing the borrowings as a threat to their cultural identity and linguistic heritage. Ochilo recommended that language revitalization efforts in the region should involve younger generations in discussions about language change, emphasizing the cultural significance of preserving linguistic purity.

Kasavaga and Alphonse (2022) examined how lexical borrowing in Kihehe, a Bantu language spoken in Tanzania, reflects the socio-cultural influence of global languages and its impact on cultural identity. The researchers used a combination of fieldwork and corpus analysis to identify loanwords in everyday communication among Kihehe speakers. They also conducted surveys to determine the attitudes of speakers toward borrowed words. The study found that loanwords in Kihehe, especially those borrowed from English and Swahili, were primarily associated with technology, education, and governance. The study also found that younger speakers were more likely to embrace these borrowings, while older speakers were more resistant, viewing the practice as indicative of cultural dilution. The authors suggested that language policymakers should prioritize the promotion of indigenous languages in education and media to counterbalance the growing influence of global languages.

Hassan (2023) investigated the semantic change in Swahili words borrowed from Arabic and their impact on cultural identity among Swahili speakers in East Africa. A historical and comparative analysis was employed, focusing on the etymology of Arabic loanwords in Swahili. In-depth interviews with Swahili speakers were conducted to understand the cultural significance of these loanwords. The study found that Arabic borrowings had a significant impact on Swahili identity, particularly among coastal communities that have historically been in contact with Arab traders. The borrowed terms, many of which were related to religion and trade, reinforced a cultural identity that is both African and Arab in nature. The study recommended that language preservation efforts should embrace the historical roots of Swahili, recognizing the cultural hybridity it embodies rather than viewing foreign influences as a threat to its authenticity.



Sasala, Alati, and Mudogo (2019) aimed to explore the role of lexical borrowing in the Lukabaras-speaking community in Kenya and its relationship to identity and social stratification. The researchers employed both ethnographic fieldwork and sociolinguistic interviews to analyze how speakers of Lukabaras incorporated loanwords from the Nandi language and the social meanings attached to these borrowings. The study found that lexical borrowing from Nandi was used by Lukabaras speakers as a marker of social alignment and group affiliation. The use of Nandi borrowings was particularly prominent in interactions with other ethnic groups, reflecting the influence of regional power dynamics. Sasala et al. recommended that future research explore the intersection of lexical borrowing and regional power structures to better understand how language functions in social stratification.

Lucy (2016) examined how lexical borrowing from English influences the cultural identity of speakers in indigenous Australian communities. The researcher utilized a combination of discourse analysis and interviews with indigenous speakers across various Australian communities to identify the effects of English loanwords on their cultural identity. The study found that while English borrowings in indigenous languages helped speakers engage with broader Australian society, they also caused tensions within communities. Older speakers viewed English borrowings as a threat to cultural traditions, while younger generations saw them as necessary for social mobility. Lucy recommended that further research be conducted into the impact of English on indigenous languages, particularly focusing on how lexical borrowing might contribute to intergenerational divides within cultural groups.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

### **4.0 FINDINGS**

This study presented both a contextual and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Lucy (2016) examined how lexical borrowing from English influences the cultural identity of speakers in indigenous Australian communities. Unlike the others, which focus specifically on lexical borrowing and its implications for cultural identity, Lucy's study explored the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis and the broader relationship between language, culture, and cognition. This study delved into how language shapes thought and cultural perceptions, rather than focusing on the effects of lexical borrowing on cultural identity specifically. Therefore, it addressed a different aspect of language theory compared to the other studies, which focus on the sociolinguistic phenomena of lexical borrowing in multilingual or post-colonial contexts. On the other hand, this current study focused on examining how the use of borrowed words affects or reflects people's cultural identity.



Secondly, a methodological gap also presents itself, for example, in their study on exploring the social meaning potential of loanwords in multilingual societies, particularly focusing on how lexical borrowing reflects and expresses social identity- Zenner, Rosseel, and Calude (2019) employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with speakers of various languages and quantitative analysis of language corpora. Participants were from diverse linguistic backgrounds in Europe and Africa. They used both sociolinguistic surveys and discourse analysis to investigate how speakers used borrowed lexicon in specific social contexts. Whereas, the current study adopted a desktop research method.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the relationship between lexical borrowing and cultural identity is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that reveals significant insights into how language shapes and reflects the cultural dynamics of societies. Lexical borrowing is not simply a linguistic process, but a social act that plays a key role in negotiating cultural identity in an increasingly globalized world. It serves as both a symbol of cultural exchange and a mechanism for cultural adaptation, as communities integrate foreign terms into their lexicon to align with or resist dominant cultural forces. This process reflects the evolving nature of cultural identities as individuals and communities navigate the pressures of modernity, social mobility, and global interconnectedness. Through borrowing, speakers express affiliations with different cultural groups, negotiate their place in the social hierarchy, and reshape their cultural practices to incorporate external influences while maintaining elements of their indigenous identity.

However, lexical borrowing also poses significant challenges to the preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage, particularly in post-colonial or globalized contexts where dominant languages exert pressure on minority or indigenous languages. While borrowing can enrich a language and make it more adaptable to changing realities, it can also lead to the erosion of traditional cultural markers embedded within language. In many cases, the use of borrowed terms, especially those linked to technology, governance, or consumerism, may gradually overshadow indigenous cultural expressions, thus contributing to cultural homogenization. The blending of global lexicons with local languages has the potential to dilute unique cultural identities, especially among younger generations who are more likely to embrace borrowed words as markers of modernity or status.

Moreover, the effects of lexical borrowing on cultural identity are not uniform across all social groups. The younger generation often shows a greater tendency to adopt foreign terms, driven by their aspirations for upward mobility, exposure to global media, and a desire for social prestige. In contrast, older generations or more culturally conservative groups may resist these borrowings, viewing them as a threat to linguistic purity and cultural authenticity. This generational divide highlights the role of language as both a tool of cultural continuity and a symbol of change. For younger speakers, borrowing can be a way of connecting with broader global narratives, while for older speakers, the retention of indigenous terms is a way of asserting cultural pride and safeguarding traditional values.

The study emphasizes that while lexical borrowing plays a significant role in shaping cultural identities, it is important to understand that cultural identity is not solely defined by the language



one speaks. Identity is fluid, dynamic, and shaped by a wide range of factors beyond language, including social, political, and economic contexts. Lexical borrowing is just one aspect of a broader process of cultural negotiation, where individuals and communities make choices about how to engage with external influences while preserving their sense of self. As such, the phenomenon of lexical borrowing offers valuable insights into the ongoing interaction between language, culture, and identity in a globalized world, revealing both the opportunities and challenges associated with cultural adaptation in the face of linguistic change.

## 5.2 Recommendations

In terms of theoretical contributions, the study highlights the importance of expanding traditional linguistic theories to incorporate the sociocultural dimensions of language change. While much of the existing research on lexical borrowing has focused on structural and grammatical shifts, this study calls for a broader, more integrated approach that examines how borrowing is tied to issues of identity, power, and social change. The study contributes to the development of sociolinguistic theories by emphasizing the role of language in shaping cultural and social identities. It suggests that future research should go beyond examining just the linguistic mechanisms of borrowing and focus more on how these borrowed terms function as tools of social and cultural negotiation. By acknowledging the influence of external factors, such as globalization and digital media, on language use, this research provides a richer understanding of how linguistic practices can act as markers of cultural positioning and identity formation.

From a practical perspective, the study emphasizes the need for educators, linguists, and language planners to carefully consider the cultural implications of lexical borrowing in language instruction and development. In multilingual societies, particularly those in post-colonial settings, language educators are often tasked with fostering both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. The study recommends that educators should incorporate discussions about lexical borrowing into the curriculum to help students understand how borrowing reflects broader social trends, such as globalization, migration, and technological innovation. It also suggests that educational institutions should promote critical thinking about how lexical borrowing can influence cultural identity, encouraging students to reflect on the role of language in both preserving and reshaping their cultural heritage. Furthermore, the study encourages the development of teaching materials that balance the need to understand and use borrowed words with the importance of maintaining indigenous linguistic practices.

In terms of policy recommendations, the study advocates for language policies that take into account the cultural significance of lexical borrowing while safeguarding linguistic diversity. Policymakers should recognize that lexical borrowing is not inherently harmful but can be a reflection of cultural adaptation and resilience. The study suggests that language policies should adopt a more inclusive approach, acknowledging the dynamic and evolving nature of language while simultaneously promoting efforts to preserve indigenous languages. This can include supporting bilingual or multilingual education programs that integrate both global and local languages, allowing for the accommodation of borrowed terms without compromising cultural identity. Policies should also foster community-based language preservation initiatives that prioritize the intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages, ensuring that younger



generations maintain a connection to their cultural roots while adapting to contemporary linguistic realities.

The study also makes recommendations for enhancing intercultural dialogue. It emphasizes the need for cross-cultural communication that is sensitive to the complexities of language use in multicultural societies. Governments and international organizations should encourage dialogue between communities that experience high levels of lexical borrowing and those that seek to preserve their linguistic heritage. This could take the form of forums, conferences, and workshops aimed at fostering mutual understanding between communities with different approaches to language and culture. Such efforts could contribute to building bridges between global and local linguistic practices, ensuring that borrowed terms are used in ways that reflect cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity. The study underscores that fostering intercultural dialogue is essential for promoting social cohesion in increasingly diverse and globalized societies.

On a more local level, the study recommends that communities experiencing significant lexical borrowing should engage in grassroots efforts to document and preserve indigenous languages. Local linguistic projects, including dictionaries, glossaries, and cultural archives, should be prioritized to record how borrowed terms are integrated into everyday speech. By doing so, communities can not only preserve their language but also create resources that help younger generations understand the historical and cultural significance of the language they are inheriting. These local efforts can be supported by both governmental and non-governmental organizations that provide funding and expertise in linguistic documentation. Moreover, community-based programs that promote language learning and cultural exchange can help reinforce the idea that linguistic diversity is a valuable asset that should be protected and celebrated.

Lastly, the study calls for further empirical research to deepen our understanding of how lexical borrowing impacts cultural identity across different sociolinguistic contexts. The findings from this study suggest that while lexical borrowing is a common phenomenon in many multilingual societies, its effects on identity formation can vary significantly based on factors such as socio-economic status, education, and exposure to global media. Further research is needed to explore the long-term implications of lexical borrowing on both individual and collective identities, particularly in regions that are undergoing rapid globalization or migration. Future studies should aim to compare the experiences of different cultural groups to understand how borrowing from different languages (e.g., from global languages like English or regional languages like Swahili) impacts their sense of belonging and cultural pride. By addressing these gaps in research, scholars can contribute to the development of a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and identity in the modern world.



## References

- African Union. (2019). African culture: Versatile approach to realize the Africa we want. African Union. Retrieved from <https://www.africanunion-un.org/post/african-culture-versatile-approach-to-realize-the-africa-we-want>
- Collier, M. J. (2015). Cultural identity theory. *International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0012>
- Cultural Atlas. (n.d.). Japanese culture - Core concepts. SBS. Retrieved from <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/japanese-culture/japanese-culture-core-concepts>
- de Oliveira, A. M., da Silva, M. C. R., & dos Santos, L. M. (2020). Quilombola communities and social resistance: Identity and territory in Brazil. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 37(2), 189–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873631.2020.1732385>
- Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (2019). Accommodation theory: Communication, context, and consequences. In Coupland, J., Giles, H., & Wiemann, J. M. (Eds.), *Communication Accommodation Theory* (pp. 1–68). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429030702>
- Hassan, F. A. (2023). Semantic Change in Swahili Words Borrowed From Arabic Language. University of Nairobi. Retrieved from <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/164833>
- IBGE. (2023). 2022 Census: Self-reported brown population is the majority in Brazil for the first time. Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). Retrieved from <https://nada.ibge.gov.br/en/agencia-news/2184-news-agency/news/38726-2022-census-self-reported-brown-population-is-the-majority-in-brazil-for-the-first-time>
- Kasavaga, F., & Alphonse, C. (2022). Lexical borrowing: The influence of loanwords on the semantics of Kihehe. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.61307/gjl.v12i3.496>
- NatCen Social Research. (2023). British Social Attitudes 41: National Identity. Retrieved from <https://natcen.ac.uk/publications/british-social-attitudes-41-national-identity>
- Njagi, J. K. (2016). Lexical Borrowing and Semantic Change: A Case of English and Gĩkũyũ Contact. University of Nairobi. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11295/99649>
- Ochilo, G. O. (2018). The Effect of Dholuo on Lunyore: A Case of Lexical Borrowing. University of Nairobi. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11295/105534>
- Office for National Statistics. (2012). Ethnicity and national identity in England and Wales: 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11>
- Pew Research Center. (2015). African immigrant population in U.S. steadily climbs. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2015/11/02/african-immigrant-population-in-u-s-steadily-climbs/>
- Pew Research Center. (2015). Multiracial in America. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/>



- ResearchGate. (2018). Ogihara, Y., & Uchida, Y. The rise in individualism in Japan: Temporal changes in family structure, 1947-2015. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 49(8), 1219–1229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022118757451>
- Sasala, J. M., Alati, R. A., & Mudogo, B. A. (2019). Lexical Borrowing in Spoken Lukabarás in a Multilingual Context. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2(6), 31–37. Retrieved from <https://al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/ijllt/article/view/352>
- The Guardian. (2024, June 13). Brazil floods leave Black communities disproportionately affected. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/13/brazil-floods-black-population-affected>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). Improved Race & Ethnicity Measures Reveal U.S. Population is Much More Multiracial. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html>
- UNESCO. (2021). UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379940>
- Vogue Business. (2020). São Paulo Fashion Week sets new quota to fix diversity gap. Retrieved from <https://www.voguebusiness.com/fashion/sao-paulo-fashion-week-sets-new-quota-to-fix-diversity-gap>
- Zenner, E., Rosseel, L., & Calude, A. S. (2019). The social meaning potential of loanwords: Empirical explorations of lexical borrowing as expression of (social) identity. *Ampersand*, 6, 100055. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2019.100055>