



LOANWORDS IN CHINESE AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES 3

From the 19th century onwards more and more loanwords have appeared, especially from English and Japanese. Initially transliteration was the most common method of absorbing these words into the language, such as with 电话 (telephone) 邮票 (stamp) 照相机 (camera) 青霉素 (penicillin) 小提琴 (violin) 总统 (president).

However these words were hard to understand, pronounce and remember. A new approach was characters were incorporated to create the new Chinese words. Telephone then became known as 电话, stamp as 邮票, camera as 照相机, penicillin as 青霉素, violin as 小提琴, president as 总统.

Similarly, the transliteration of democracy, 德莫克拉西 was replaced by 民主, science, 赛恩斯 was replaced by 科学, insurance, 保安 by 保险. However some transliterations remain in use today, including 沙发 (sofa) 扑克 (poker) 咖啡 (coffee) 幽默 (humor) 三明治 (sandwich) 麦克风 (microphone) 逻辑 (logic), etc...

In order to improve the inherent meaning of the transliteration, a noun is sometimes added. There are many examples of this type of word, including 啤酒 = beer, 坦克 = tank, 巧克力 = chocolate, 沙丁鱼 = sardine, 卡片 = card, 高尔夫 = golf, 桑拿 = sauna.

Chinese has not only assimilated loanwords from western languages, but also from Japanese. A number of characters that were originally adopted by Japanese from Chinese came to be used in Japanese for adopted western words. Then in a beautiful twist of cross-cultural exchange, some

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of these words were imported back into Chinese.

Some of these words are 文化(culture) 医生(doctor) 法律(law) and 经济(economy). New words were also formed in Japanese by using Chinese characters and subsequently came back into use in Chinese, including 土豆(potato) 消防(fire protection) 艺术(fine arts) 门票(admission ticket) 法人(legal person).

Following the opening up and reform policy, new loanwords such as bye-bye, goodbye, OK, and cool have begun to appear and become very popular. There are also many attempts at making transliterations suitable to Chinese in terms of the world's meaning. Some of the better combinations of sound and meaning, along with 洗发水(shampoo) 麦当劳(McDonald's) 雪碧(Sprite).

On occasion, letters and acronyms are used by themselves or in conjunction with Chinese characters. Some examples of this are B超(Ultrasonic B-scan), T恤(T-shirt), IP卡(IP card), MP3, WTO, DVD.

Sometimes the characters used for loanwords are catalysts for the development of completely new words. One such loanword, 的士, is the transliteration of taxi in Cantonese, but became accepted as far away as Beijing. New offshoots of this word include 的 meaning to take a taxi, 的 meaning male taxi driver, 的 which means good taxi driver and 的, which is, intriguingly, taxi driver's fast food.

Another commonly used transliteration that has followed this pattern is 吧, for a bar where alcoholic beverages are served. This word's offshoots include 酒吧(glassware bar) 玩具吧(toy bar) 氧吧(oxygen bar) 陶吧(pottery bar) 书吧(book bar) and 网吧(the internet bar). Some places for leisure activities are also named 吧.

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Loanwords are among the most active elements of a given language. They usually evolve in tandem with a country's social and cultural development. In Chinese, loanwords have not only been given new appearances and connotations, but have also enriched the culture by drawing in new concepts, ideas and even ways of thinking.

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