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### ZUZANA MALÁŠKOVÁ

# CONTINENTAL LOW GERMANIC LOANWORDS IN ENGLISH BORROWED OUTSIDE EUROPE

#### Abstract

In this article, I focus on Low Germanic loanwords in English which were borrowed on the basis of the interaction between the then colonial powers. Starting from the 16th century, some people from almost all European countries left for other continents seeking a better life. People of different ethnic backgrounds often mixed together, took over the territories of their rivals or cohabited for a certain period of time alongside each other in the newly settled areas. This all influenced their ways of speaking. Therefore, I decided to explore one such type of interaction and its influence on the English language in greater detail.

The English language is examined from a lexicological, or more precisely an etymological, point of view: on the basis of the etymological dictionaries mentioned below, English loanwords derived from other Low Germanic languages are collected and described. This material is further analysed in terms of the origin of the individual loanwords, the date and probable reason for their borrowing. The study is also supplemented by a brief survey of the most important historical events relevant for these borrowings.

#### **Key words**

English; Low Germanic; Loanwords; Dutch; Afrikaans; Frisian; Flemish; Low German.

#### 1. Introduction

(I) Aims. This article deals with loanwords taken into English from or through Dutch, Flemish, Frisian and Low German (for the purpose of this article, these will be called 'Continental Low Germanic') outside Europe. English is closely related to the Continental Low Germanic languages both genetically and also from a geographical point of view: the English are separated from continental Europe only by a strip of sea and therefore their contact with the continental Low Germanic peoples can be traced back through the history up to the point when the Anglo-Saxon tribes were settling the British Isles. As these nations developed side by side it is no surprise that their histories are intertwined and they meet not only in Europe but in other parts of the world as well.

Both the Dutch and the English were colonial powers in the past. Although the heyday of Dutch overseas expansion ended earlier than that of the British, the co-

lonial periods of both nations overlapped and the British often seized Dutch settlements in various parts of the world. This resulted in a takeover of not only the area and the system of administration that the Dutch settlers had earlier managed to impose on their territory, but the British also adopted cultural and linguistic practices. After the English gained control over new areas overseas which had belonged to the Dutch, they had to deal with the Dutch settlers living in those areas; and despite the initial hostilities between the two groups of settlers with different backgrounds, they assimilated to each other after a few generations.

The purpose of this article is to focus on the interactions of Dutch as well as Low German, Frisian and Flemish with English in their colonial territories from an unconventional point of view, namely by studying the influence that their mutual interaction had on their languages. My assumption was that the languages were mutually affected during the years that the English and Continental Low Germanic peoples cohabited. Therefore, I decided to examine whether the Continental Low Germanic languages influenced the vocabulary of the English language and, if they did, what the results of such influence were. For that purpose I consulted the most important etymological dictionaries of English and other sources in order to search for English words which might stem from either of the Continental Low Germanic languages and were adopted into English in one of the English territories outside Europe. This article offers a description of the results of my study, the collected material and an analysis of it from an etymological and semantic point of view. Moreover, I provide a brief description of the historical background for the lexical borrowing.

(II) Method. Today, English is perceived to be one of the most influential languages, as it is spoken all over the world and its words and expressions find their way into other languages. In this study, I decided to look at English not as a source for lexical borrowing, but instead I focus on Continental Low Germanic languages as donors for English. First, I consulted studies on foreign words in English, namely Bliss (1996) and Serjeantson (1935) who both devoted a part of their work to describing Continental Low Germanic loanwords. Then I verified and supplemented the collected material by consulting the Online Etymology Dictionary.

Other sources used included etymological dictionaries of the English language, i.e. those of Barnhart (1988), Klein (1967), Hoad (1986) and Partridge (2006), from which I extracted information on words with a possible Continental Low Germanic origin. Another requirement that the loanwords had to meet was that they were adopted outside of Europe. For the purpose of this study, I did not use any corpora but relied solely on the information in the etymological dictionaries.

### 2. Historical background

Following the discovery of America, those European nations with seafaring experience, among them the British and the Continental Low Germanic peoples,

began to make an increasing number of voyages in order to explore new territories and find wealth and land for their home countries. The 17th century was marked by establishing new settlements in various parts of the world. At first such settlements were few and served mainly as places where the sailors could rest and replenish their supplies for the next voyage. Later, more permanent and larger settlements were founded, usually solely under the possession of one nation or another but, depending on the particular historical situation, multiple nationalities might have met in such places. In order to examine the main events of the British encounter with the Low Germanic peoples in these settlements in greater detail, the relevant territories will be dealt with individually.

(I) Africa and Asia. A crucial part of exploring and colonizing territories in Africa and Asia was the establishment of companies granted a monopoly from their respective states for carrying out commerce overseas. The Dutch East India Company was founded in 1602 while its closest competitor in this area, the English East India Company had emerged already two years before. The Dutch Company enjoyed great prosperity during the 17th and 18th centuries and managed to acquire a number of territories and found many trading posts; their first base was established in Banten, West Java and later they settled other areas (e.g. the west coast of Sumatra, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, etc.) and also managed to drive the Portuguese out of many of their trading points, one of the most important of these being Malacca.

However, the Portuguese were not the only rivals of the Dutch in Asia. The English East India Company, though it was not as successful as the Dutch in the 17th century, began to assume a more prominent position over the 18th century and eventually posed a great threat to the Dutch trading posts. Especially decisive was the era of the Napoleonic Wars, when the English seized many Dutch territories in Asia as well as in Africa. Although the majority of these territories were restored to the Dutch after the Anglo–Dutch Treaty of 1814, new opportunities for language exchange resulted.

For the voyages of the Dutch East India Company it was indispensable to set up a secure base at the halfway point to India in order to provide ships with new supplies and a safe place to rest. Therefore, Jan van Riebeek was commissioned to found a settlement in South Africa at the Cape of Good Hope, which he successfully did in 1652. This base was intended solely for the use of the Dutch Company. Dutch settlers there soon entered into contact with the natives for the purposes of trade and in order to gain slaves, which also facilitated cultural and linguistic exchange between them.

This settlement, which later developed into a town, was maintained by the Dutch East India Company until the end of the 18th century, when it was ended by the British during the Napoleonic Wars; unlike other such acquired territories, it was not returned to the Netherlands afterwards. The new English colonists had to deal with the Dutch who considered the land to be their home (and who even developed their own language, Afrikaans, during the one and a half centuries that they controlled the Cape colony). This situation inevitably led to many clashes

between these two peoples and only 30 years after the Declaration of Independence of the South African Republic, in 1882, did the Dutch obtain equal rights concerning the use of their language in schools, offices and government.

(II). America. In order to carry out business activities in America, another company, the Dutch West India Company was founded in 1621. Under its patronage voyages to both North and South America, the Caribbean and West Africa were made. The activities of this Company in North America is of particular importance for this study. Already in 1609, Henry Hudson sailed into the estuary of the river later named after him. In 1624 a colony called New Netherlands was established there and it remained under Dutch control until 1664, when the governor of the Dutch colony decided to surrender to the more numerous English army sent to capture this territory by the Duke of York. The Dutch attempted to regain the territory, but except for a short period of restitution in 1673–1674, the area remained under the control of England. After the English conquest, most of the Dutch inhabitants stayed in the area and gradually assimilated to the English, thus many Dutch institutions and also cultural as well as linguistic practices were adopted by the English.

However, this initial colonisation was not the only source from which Low Germanic peoples came to North America. The Low Germanic culture and language of the first settlers was reinforced by numerous later immigrants from the Low Countries as well as from Germany who found a new home in the USA.

### 3. Analysis

After a thorough analysis of my sources, I arrived at the number of 69 loan-words which were borrowed in one of the former colonies or settlements where the Dutch people stood in some kind of relationship with the English. The division of the loanwords according to their place of origin is depicted in Fig. 1. It is

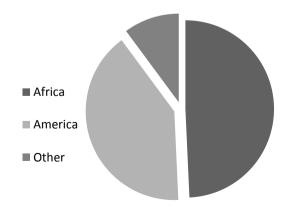


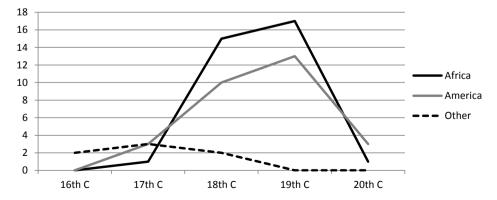
Fig. 1: Division of the loanwords according to their country of origin.

obvious that the words borrowed in Africa were the most numerous; this can be ascribed to the fact that the Dutch inhabitants had managed to securely establish themselves in that area during the almost 150 years that they administered the colony before the English seized it. Furthermore, even after the conquest people of Dutch origin formed a substantial part of the population of South Africa and also possessed social prestige, which made their language a potent source for borrowing.

While North America, with its 28 loanwords first attested there, does not fall much behind South Africa, I found only 7 words which were borrowed into English in the remaining former Dutch colonies and their spheres of influence.

It is interesting to note in Fig. 2 that the number of words borrowed in each century closely correspond to the intensity of contact with the English and also to the prestige that the Dutch language enjoyed in that particular region during the respective century. While the Dutch sailors along with the English found their way to Asia due to the profitable spice trade already in the 16th century and therefore some linguistic exchange in those areas was facilitated – this is attested by two words of Dutch origin in English *monsoon* and *bamboo* – the first word of Continental Low Germanic origin appeared in American English no sooner than in the 17th century. In the area of South Africa, the first loanwords with the exception of *Hottentot*, were borrowed only in the 18th century because of the relative isolation of the Cape Colony and its sole purpose of replenishing the stock of Dutch ships on their way to Asia.

In both America and Africa, the number of loanwords slightly rises during the 19th century. This may be either due to the continuous contact between the peoples, but also because it takes some time for a word to be naturalised in the target language so that it appears in writing. On the other hand, I was not able to find any loanwords originating in other colonies borrowed later than in the 18th century. The Dutch may have been losing their prominent position which had previously



**Fig. 2:** The number of loanwords borrowed in Africa, America and other colonies across the centuries.

secured them prestige and made their language worthy of imitation in the view of the English. Another explanation might be that this particular field lacks a thorough investigation and therefore no reflections of possible English loanwords originating in either of the Continental Low Germanic languages (or accepted through either of them) in other colonies stemming from the 19th century or later is recorded in modern etymological dictionaries.

With the exception of three words to bluff, to snoop and possibly to trek, all the other loanwords are nouns which usually designate a new concept not previously known to the English. It is interesting to observe the differences between the semantic fields of loanwords borrowed in South Africa and in America. Most of the South African words designate peoples, animals, and things typical for this region, e.g. names for the aboriginal inhabitants bushman, Hottentot and also designations for the white/Dutch inhabitants of South Africa, Afrikander, Boer, uitlander/outlander; different kinds of antelopes (duiker, eland, gemsbok etc.) and other animals (aardvark, aardwolf, ratel); everyday items unknown or not used in Europe (kaross, knobkerrie). Furthermore, some words describing some particular features of the South African countryside (kopje, kranz, veldt) were adopted by the English as well as military terms (laager, schanz/schanse). Food is represented only by a few items (biltong, mealie). Some words relate to important historical events, e.g. trek adopted into English on the basis of the Great Trek (Afrikaans Die Groot Trek) and apartheid as the name for a system of racial segregation ordered by the former government of the South African Republic.

The loanwords first attested in America are of more varied meaning. One name for another people inhabiting the area is also attested, *Yankee*, but we completely lack a designation for animals, excepting possibly for *scrod* (this word would be rather a part of the semantic field cooking/food). On the other hand, these loanwords are more culture-oriented (*Santa Claus*, *knickers*) and related to administrative practices (*boss*, *patroon*). There is also one word referring to the countryside, *kill*. Words concerning food (*cookie*, *coleslaw*, *cruller*, *dope*, *waffle*) are represented by a greater number than in South Africa. We also find some slang American words originating in Continental Low Germanic (*boodle*, *geek*, *snoop*).

As there are only seven words originating in other colonies, no conclusions can be drawn as to one or another area typical area of borrowing. Nonetheless, all of these words have something in common, namely they are all nouns, designate things not previously known in Europe and, except for *drogher*, all of them were borrowed through Dutch from some other language.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article explored what linguistic influence the cohabitation of English and Continental Low Germanic peoples outside Europe had on the English language, specifically on the English vocabulary. As a result of this study based on an examination of etymological dictionaries and other sources, 69 English loanwords

from either of the Continental Low Germanic languages borrowed outside of Europe were collected, described and analysed.

The analysis showed that the greatest number of loanwords were borrowed in South Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries and mostly designate animals, peoples, features of the countryside and everyday items. North America was the second largest source of loanwords, but unlike South Africa, here the words were oriented rather toward the cultural peculiarities that the Continental Low Germanic speakers brought from their home country, including cooking practices. Only seven words originated in other colonies and for most of them Dutch was only an intermediate language before they were adopted into English.

### Collected material

English loanword	Source language	Place of origin	First attested	Ref.
aardvark 'Orycteropus afer'	Afr. Du <i>aardvark</i> lit. 'earth-pig'	Afr.	1833	Kl 1, OED
aardwolf 'a S. African hyenalike mammal'	aard 'earth' + wolf	Afr.	1833	K1 1
Afrikander 'a South African native of Dutch descent'	Du. Afrikaner 'African'	Afr.	1822	K1 35, OED
apartheid 'the system of rigorous segregation between Europeans and others practised by the Government of South Africa'	apartheid 'separation', Du. apart 'separate' + suffix -heid	Afr.	20 C	Bl, Kl 87
bamboo 'woody grass'	Du bamboe, bamboes > Portugese bambu > Malay bambu	col.	1590	В 73
banket 'the conglomerate in the Witwatersrand gold district in the Transvaal'	Du. lit. 'sweetmeat'	Afr.	1887	Kl 146
bantam 'small domestic fowl' named after a town in Java from which it was first imported	Bantam Du, former Dutch residency in Java	col.	1837	B 75
batik 'a technique of hand-dyeing cloth'	borrowed probably through Du batik (because of the Dutch colonial control of Indonesia) from Javanese mbatik 'writing, drawing'	col.	1880	B 81
bazooka 'a tubular gun for firing small rockets' earlier use 'trombone-like instrument'	Du bazuin 'trumpet, trombone'	Amer.	1942, 1900	B 82
biltong 'strips of lean meat dried in the sun'	Du bil 'rump' + tong 'tongue'	Afr.	19 C	Bl, Kl 173
bluff poker term 'to give a false impression of strength' Amer. Eng.	Du bluffen 'to brag, boast'	Amer.	1839	Hoad 44

English loanword	Source language	Place of origin	First attested	Ref.
Boer 'South African Dutch farmer'	Du boer 'peasant, farmer'	Afr.	19 C	Bl, Kl 183
boodle 'crowd, phony money, graft money' Amer. Eng. Slang	boedel Du 'property'	Amer.	1833	OED
boss 'master, employer'	Du baas, Mdu baes, Du form baas attested in Amer. English from 1620 as a title of a Dutch ship's captain	Amer.	1882	OED
bowery 'farm, plantation', a Du word probably of little used outside New York, and there soon limited to one road, later a district notorious for squalor, rowdiness, and low life	Du bowerij 'homestead farm'	Amer.	1787	OED
buck 'sawhorse'	Du bok 'trestle, vaulting frame'	Amer.	1817	B122
bushman	S. Afr. Du <i>Boschjesman</i> , Du. <i>Bosjesman</i> lit. 'man of the bush'	Afr.	1785	KI 213, OED
cockatoo 'parrot of the genera Cacatua'	kaketoe Du > Malay kakatua	col.	1634	B185
coleslaw 'a salad of raw cabbage with vinegar, salt and pepper'	a partial translation of Du koolsla, kool 'cabbage' + sla 'salad'	Amer.	1794	OED
cookie 'small cake'	prob. borrowed from Du <i>koekje</i> 'little cake', diminutive of <i>koek</i> 'cake'	Amer.	1703	B 218
cranberry 'red acid berry'	apparently borrowed from LG kraanbere LG kraan + bere 'berry'	Amer.	1640s	OED, B 231
cruller 'a rich, light cake cut from a rolled dough and deep- fried', 'twisted doughnut'	Du kruller 'to curl', M.Du crullen	Amer.	1805	B 238, OED
dingus 'any unspecified or unspecifiable object, something whose name is unknown or forgotten', slang	Du dinges 'thing'	Amer.	1876	B 280, OED
dope 'sauce, gravy'	Du <i>doop</i> 'thick dipping sauce', <i>doopen</i> 'to dip'	Amer.	1807	Bl, OED
drogher 'a vessel used in the coasting trade in West Indies'	Du <i>droger</i> (formerly spelled drogher) dryer of e.g. a herring	col.	1756	MW
duiker 'a small horned antelope of S. African from the subfamily Cephalophinae'	duiken 'to dive' Du	Afr.	1777	K1 487
eland 'S. Afr. Antelope'	eland Afrik. (Du)	Afr.	1786	H 143
geek 'sideshow freak' US carnival and circus slang	geck LG 'a fool, dupe, simpleton'	Amer.	1916	
gemsbok 'S. African antelope', lit. 'the male of chamois'	gems 'chamois' + bok 'buck' Du	Afr.	1777	Kl 646

English loanword	Source language	Place of origin	First attested	Ref.
grysbok 'S. Afr. antelope'	grijs 'grey' + bok 'buck' Du	Afr.	1786	H 204
hartebeest 'antelope'	hert 'hart' + beest 'beast, ox'	Afr.	1786	OED, KI 706
Hottentot 'designation for the native people in the Cape Colony, latter derogatory'	S. Afr. Du <i>hot en tot</i> , lit. 'hot and tot', after the clicks and jerks in the native speech of the Cape of Good Hope		1670	OED, KI 746
hunk 'a large piece cut off'	West Flemish <i>hunke</i> used of bread and meat, perh. related to Du <i>homp</i> 'lump, hump'	Amer.	1813	B 497
<i>kaross</i> 'a cloak of skin worn by S. African natives'	through S. Afr. Du from prob. Hottentot	Afr.	1731	Kl 840
kill n. 'stream, creek'	from Du kil, M.Du kille 'riverbed'	Amer.	1669	OED, Bl, B 564
klipspringer 'a small African antelope'	klip 'rock' + springer 'a leaper, springer' Du	Afr.	1785	K1 848
kloof 'a deep gorge, ravine'	S. Afr. Du from MDu <i>clove</i> 'cleft'	Afr.	1731	K1 848
knickers, shortening from knickerbockers 'short loose fitting trousers gathered at the knees'	called for their resemblance to the trousers of old-time Dutchmen in Cruikshank's illustrations for Washington Irving's "History of New York"	Amer.	1881	B 568, OED
knobkerrie 'a short Kaffir club used as a weapon'	S. Afr. Du <i>knopkierie</i> coined from Du <i>knob(be)</i> 'knob' + Hottentot <i>kirrie</i> 'stick, club'	Afr.	1844	K1 850
kopje 'a small rounded hill in South Africa'	kopje Du, Afrikaans koppie	Afr.	19C	Bl, OED
kraal 'village, pen, enclosure consisting of huts' surrounded by a stockade with a space for cattle in the middle'	kraal Du, Afrikaans/South African Dutch adopted prob. Portuguese curral 'pen' or Spanish corral	Afr.	18C	Bl, OED
kranz, krantz 'a wall of rock round the summit of a mountain'	kranz 'chaplet'	Afr.	19 C	Bl
laager 'an encampment (of Boer migrants)'	Du leger 'camp'	Afr.	19 C	Bl, Kl 855
mealie 'maize'	milje S. Afr. Du	Afr.	1853	K1 952
monsoon 'seasonal wind of the Indian Ocean and southern Asia'	borrowed through EMDu monssoen > Portuguese moncao > Arabic mawsim 'appropriate season'	col.	1584	В 675
patroon 'a landowner with certain privileges under the former Dutch government of New York and New Jersey'	borrowing of Du patroon from French patron 'master, patron'	Amer.	1744	B 765
pea-jacket 'a short coat of thick woollen cloth'	borrowed by loan translation from North Frisian <i>pijekkat</i> , <i>Du</i> <i>pijjekker</i> ( <i>pij</i> 'coarse woolen cloth' + <i>jekker</i> 'jacket')	Amer.	1721	B 767

English loanword	Source language	Place of origin	First attested	Ref.
pit 'hard seed of a cherry, peach, etc'	Du pit 'kernel, seed, marrow'	Amer.	1841	B 799
ratel 'a badgerlike mammal'	prob. shortening of S. Afr. Du rateldas, raat 'honeycomb' + das 'badger'	Afr.	1731	Kl 1303
reebok 'South African antelope, Pelea capreolus'	roebuck Du	Afr.	1775	OED, K1 1316
Santa Claus	borrowed from dialectal Du Sante Klaas, M.Du Sinter Niklaas 'Saint Nicholas'	Amer.	1773	OED, B 956
scow 'a large, flat-bottomed boat'	Du schouw 'ferry boat'	Amer.	1780	B 971
scrod 'young fish'	possibly borrowed from Du schrood 'a piece cut off', associated with the fish because it is usually split into pieces for cooking or drying	Amer.	1841	В 973
schanz 'breastwork of stones'	S. Afr. Du schans	Afr.	1880	Kl 1394
sjambok 'heavy whip made of rhinoceros or hippopotamus hide'	Afrikaans < Malay <i>chamboq</i> < Hindustani <i>chābuk</i>	Afr.	19 C	Bl
sleigh	Du slee	Amer.	1703	B 1017
snoop, informal, 'to go about in a sneaking, prying way'	Du <i>snoepen</i> 'eat in secret, eat sweets, steal food'	Amer.	1832	B 1027
soy 'brown sauce made from the fermented beans'	from Du <i>soya</i> > Japanese <i>sōyu</i>	col.	1679	B 1038
spook 'ghost, spectre'	Du spook, MDu spooc 'spook, ghost'	Amer.	1801	B 1050
springbok 'South African gazelle, Antidorcas marsupialis', lit 'springing buck'	spring 'to leap' + bok 'antelope' Du	Afr.	1775	OED, KI 1497
spruit, sluit 'a channel of rain'	S. Afr. Du from MDu <i>sprūte</i> 'to sprout'	Afr.	1832	Kl 1497
steenbok 'a small antelope'	Du steen 'stone' + bok 'buck', M.Du steenboc	Afr.	1775	Kl 1508
stoep 'a raised platform at the front and sometimes round the sides, of a horse; veranda'	S. Afr. Du fr. Du stoep 'threshold'	Afr.	1797	Kl 1517
stoop 'porch, veranda'	Du stoep 'flight of steps, doorstep, stoop'	Amer.	1755	B 1071, OED
trek ' (one stage of) a journey by ox-wagon, to make a journey by ox-wagon, (to make) any kind of arduous journey across country'	S. Afr. Du <i>treck, trecken</i> 'pull, haul; to draw, to pull'	Afr.	19 C	BI, KI 1645
<i>uitlander, outlander</i> 'a foreigner, especially a British settler in the Boer republics'	S. Afr. compound of Du <i>uit</i> 'out' + <i>land</i> 'land'	Afr.	19C	Bl, OED, Kl 1672

English loanword	Source language	Place of origin	First attested	Ref.
veldt 'South African grassland'	veld Du 'field'	Afr.	19C	Bl, OED
waffle 'batter cake cooked in a special griddle'	Du wafel 'waffle'	Amer.	1744	B 1214
yankee 'a native or inhabitant of the United States', Amer. used by Duch settler in New Amsterdam to designate the English colonists	Du Janke 'little John'	Amer.	1683	OED, see also B1250/1

**Abbreviations:** Afr – Afrikaans; B –Barnhart; Bl – Bliss; Du – Dutch ; MDu – Middle Dutch; OED – Online Etymology Dictionary

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