

# Asian Borrowing in Commercial and Scientific Modern English

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## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to show the introduction of Asian loanwords in commercial and scientific Modern English. There are several reasons why English speakers might want to adopt a foreign word. The simplest one is that the word is the name for something new, which is often the case in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The definitions and etymologies of the loanwords selected together with the date and work where they are first registered are extracted from the OED.

*Key words: asian, borrowing, commercial, scientific, Modern English.*

## RESUMEN

El propósito principal de este artículo es mostrar la introducción de préstamos asiáticos en el Inglés Moderno comercial y científico. Hay varias razones por las que los hablantes ingleses podrían querer adoptar un extranjerismo. La más simple es que el vocablo es la denominación de algo nuevo, que suele ser el caso en los siglos XVIII y XIX. Las definiciones y etimologías de los préstamos seleccionados, junto con la fecha y obra donde se registran por primera vez, se extraen del OED.

*Palabras clave: asiático, préstamo, comercial, científico, Inglés Moderno.*

The late eighteenth century and much of the nineteenth century saw the continued expansion of the British Empire, a period when earlier colonialism truly became an age of imperialism. Captain Cook explored the Pacific during this transitional time. The heyday of the Empire —on which the sun never set— was clearly the second half of the nineteenth century.

As M. Mele Marrero and A. Martín Díaz emphasize, “a partir de 1800 comenzará la gran expansión de la lengua inglesa. Las migraciones hacia el continente americano, el establecimiento definitivo de colonias, unido al desarrollo del comercio británico, harán que el poder del imperio se transfiera a la lengua”. (In the nineteenth century the great expansion of the English language began. The power of the Empire was transferred to the language because of the migrations to the American continent and the definitive establishment of colonies, associated with the development of British trade) (Bernárdez Sanchís et al., 2001: 591).

According to M. Görlach, “as a consequence of the colonial expansion in Africa, Asia and Australia, the English language began to import words from ‘exotic’ languages without the mediation of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch or French” (1999: 107). New territories meant new experiences, activities and products that were reflected eventually in the language, especially in its vocabulary. Commercial routes have always been an important means of transfer of ideas and words. As J. J. Smith states, “perhaps the principal new source of loanwords into English resulted from the encounter between Europeans and the peoples they met during the trading and imperial expansions of the period” (1999: 153-54). And R.

L. Trask adds: “English has borrowed many thousands of words from other languages, and is still doing so today” (1994: 12).

The most significant loanwords from the Asian Continent belonged to the eighteenth century, their origin was Arabic, Persian, Indian, Chinese, Turkish or Russian. Their adoption was due to the expansion of the British Empire as a consequence of exploration and the search for new markets for trading. In M. Görlach’s opinion,

whereas early borrowings came through Spanish (and Portuguese, French, etc.), most items were borrowed straight into the local forms of English in the case of the US, Canada, the Caribbean, Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand. Only a few of these items became loanwords proper, most remaining designations for foreign objects, often for species of flora and fauna, food and drink, dresses and customs (1999: 117).

In the Arabic vocabulary, commercial and scientific terms —mainly mathematical— decreased and words related to customs (Muslim religion and mythology, etc.) and products (animals, plants, clothes, etc.) of this origin increased. As C. M. Millward emphasizes, “the exotic products [...] were directly responsible for the introduction of thousands of new loan-words into English” (1996: 227). For example, he states: “Arabic is the source of *ghoul*, *harem*, *hashish*, *henna*, *hookah*, and *sheik*” (ibid.: 330).

Commercial relationships with the Arabs gave rise to words such as *abassi* (‘a silver coin current in the reign of Chah Abbás, somewhat less than an English shilling’; Arabic “abassi”, ‘coin’. 1753: *Chambers’s Cyclopaedia Supplement*), *adeb* (‘a large Egyptian weight’; Arabic “adeb”. 1743: *Chambers’s Cyclopaedia*), *alcavala* (‘the tax’; Spanish “alcabala, —vala”, Arabic “alcabála”, from “qabala”, ‘to receive’. 1776: Adam Smith), *ardeb* (‘an Egyptian dry measure of five and a half bushels’; Arabic “irdab, ur—”. 1861: G. A. Sala, *Twice Round the Clock*), *babar* (‘a measure of weight used in parts of India and China, varying in value in different places from 223 to 625 pounds’; Arabic “bahar”. 1753: *Chambers’s Cyclopaedia Supplement*) and *medjidie* (‘a Turkish silver coin first minted by the Sultan Abdul-Medjid in 1844, equal to 20 piastres’; Turkish-Arabic “meyidie”, from the noun Abdul Majíd. 1882: *Macmillan’s Magazine*).

The Arabic loanwords in Modern English were mainly textile: e.g. *basan* ('sheep-skin tanned in oak —or larch— bark'; French "basane", Portuguese "bazana", Spanish "badana", Arabic "bitána". 1714: *French Book of Rates*), *burdet* ('some kind of cotton fabric'; French "burdet", Arabic "burdet". 1710: *The London Gazette*), *camese* ('the shirt worn by Arabs and other Mohammedans'; PDE (Present-Day English) *camise*, Arabic "qamis". 1812: G. G. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), *eezar* ('the outer garment of Moslem women, a long cotton mantle covering the whole person'; PDE *izar*, Arabic "eezar". 1836: Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*), *hirrawem* ('a kind of dress used by the Arabs in Spain and Africa, the dress worn by Mohammedan pilgrims, consisting of two pieces of white cotton, the one girded round the waist, and the other thrown over the left shoulder'; PDE *ibram*, Arabic "hirrawem", from "harama", 'to forbid'. 1704: J. Pitts, *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammedans*), *jelab* ('a hooded cloak worn in Morocco'; Arabic "jiláb", 'a tunic'. 1849: W. S. Mayo, *Kaloolab*), *sherry vallies* ('pantaloons made of thick velvet or leather'; PDE *sherryvallies*, Arabic "sirwal". 1778: Gen. C. Lee, *Letters*), *sherval* ('a kind of loose trousers worn in various Asiatic countries'; Arabic "sharwal". 1844: translation of *Maria T. Asmar's Memoirs of the Babylonian Princess*), *tarpons* ('a cap of cloth or felt with tassel attached at the top, worn by Mohammedans either by itself or as part of the turban'; PDE *tarboosh*, Arabic "tarbush". 1702: W. J. , translation of *Bruyn's Voyage to the Levant*), *tobe* ('a length of cotton cloth, worn as an outer garment by natives of Northern and Central Africa'; Arabic "thaub". 1835: *The Court Magazine*) and *yashmak* ('the double veil concealing the part of the face below the eyes, worn by Mohammedan women in public'; Arabic "yashmaq". 1844: Kinglake, *Eothen*).

The semantic field of dyes and colours is associated to fabrics. With this meaning we found loanwords in Modern English such as *alizari* ('the root of the *Rubia peregrina*, called in the Levant *Alizari*, was the material to which dyers had recourse'; French and Spanish, Arabic "al-'asára", 'a commercial name of the Madder of the Levant', 'juice pressed out'. 1850: *Botanical Gazette*), *almagra* ('an ochre of a fine deep red'; Spanish, Arabic "al-maghrāh", 'red ochre'. 1703: J. Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*), *alquifou* ('a lead ore, containing sulphide of lead, which when broken looks like antimony; it is found in Cornwall, and is used by potters to give a green glaze to coarse earthenware'; French, Arabic "alkoh 1", 'alcohol'. 1819: *Pantologia*), *anil* ('the Indigo shrub; the indigo dye'; French, Arabic

“annil”, ‘indigo’, from “nīla”, ‘dark blue’. 1712: translation of *Pomet’s Compleat History of Drugs*), *aniline* (‘a chemical base important in the arts as the source of many beautiful dyes; obtained originally by distilling indigo with caustic potash, but subsequently from many other sources, especially coal-tar’; from “anil” and French “-in, -ine”. 1850: Daubeny, *An Introduction to the Atomic Theory*), *belleric* (‘the astringent fruit of *Terminalia Bellerica*, also called Bastaid Myrobalan, imported from India for the use of calico-printers, and used for the production of a permanent black’; Arabic “balilaj”). 1757: Parsons in *Philosophical Transactions*), *carmine* (‘a beautiful red or crimson pigment obtained from cochineal’; French or Spanish, Arabic “qirmazi”). 1799: H. Hunter, Translation of *St. Pierre’s Studies of Nature*) and *fustet* (‘a small European shrub (*Rhus Cotinus*), from which a yellow dye is extracted’; Arabic “fustuq”. 1821: Ure, *A Dictionary of Chemistry*).

In chemical terminology of Modern English there were also Arabic loanwords such as *achirite* (‘a translucent silicate of copper, crystallizing in six-sided prisms, called emerald copper ore’; from the Arabic noun Achir Mahmed, related to the discovery of this substance’. 1837: Dana, *Manual of Mineralogy*), *altincar* (‘crude borax’; Arabic “al-tinkar”. 1753: Chambers, *Cyclopaedia Supplement*), *anatron* (‘native carbonate of soda’; Spanish “anatrón”, Arabic “an-natron”. 1706: Phillips), *andalusite* (‘a very hard silicate of alumina, found in rhombic crystals of various colour’; after Andalucía, ‘a province of Spain where first found’, and French “-ite”. 1837: Dana, *Manual of Mineralogy*), *attar* (‘a very fragrant, volatile, essential oil obtained from the petals of the rose’; Persian “çatar”, ‘perfume essence’, Arabic “çitar”, pl.: ‘aroma’. 1798: Pennant, *Hindustan*), *kibrit* (‘sulphur’; Arabic “kibrit”. 1706: Phillips), *tenfikose* (‘a peculiar sugar found in the milk of the buffalo of the East’; from the name of Mohammed Tewfik Pasha (1879-92). 1891: *Daily Chronicle*, 18<sup>th</sup> of March) and *trona* (‘native hydrous sodium carbonate, found in various places in Northern Africa and America’; Arabic “tron”, apococate form of “natrun”, ‘natron’. 1799: Kirwan, *Geological Essays*).

English also adopted Persian loanwords. These words, related mainly to the textile field, so esteemed in the Western world, were acquired especially during the period of the Seven Years’ War. In the eighteenth century most of them were introduced through India: e.g. *kinco* (‘a rich Indian stuff, embroidered with gold or silver’; Persian “kimkhob”. 1712: *The Spectator*), *pardow* (‘a curtain, especially one serving to screen women from the sight of men or strangers’; PDE *pardab*, Persian “pardah”. 1800: *Miscellaneous Tracts in Asiatic Annual Register*) and

*seersucker* ('a thin linen, or sometimes cotton, fabric, striped and with a crimped or puckered surface, of Indian manufacture'; East Indian corruption of Persian "shī'r-o-shakkar", 'milk and sugar'. 1757: Guyon, *New History of the East Indies*).

The nouns taken directly from Persian were usually first registered in travel books, as in Early Modern English. In the eighteenth century and especially in the second half of the nineteenth century the following Persian loanwords were introduced into English: e.g. *kob-i-noor* ('an Indian diamond, famous for its size and history, which became one of the British Crown jewels on the annexation of the Punjab in 1849; hence, allusively, any magnificent large diamond'; Persian "koh-i nur", 'mountain of light'. 1849: Thackeray, *Pendennis*) or *pashm* ('the under-fur of hairy quadrupeds in the elevated lands north of the Himalayas, especially that of the goat, which is the material of Cashmere shawls'; Persian "pashm", 'wool'. 1880: Mrs. A. G. F. E. James, *Indian Industries*). As C. M. Millward recognizes, "probably directly from Persian were *attar*, *baẓaar*, *percale*, and *shawl*" (1996: 288).

The most promising markets for the British in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not in Europe, whose industries were being developed and whose rulers were hostile to the importation of products, but abroad, i. e. the New World, Africa and the East.

In the eighteenth century, interest in journeys to the East decreased in Great Britain. In the middle of that century France's desire for political dominance threatened India, and the Company of the East Indies, commanded by the young Englishman Clive, fought against the French brilliantly. The battle between England and France in India, with various English victories, revived the interest in the East, and a new period of loanwords started in 1750.

British naval success during the Napoleonic Wars, ending with Nelson's victory in Trafalgar in 1805, put England in a position of unquestioned naval supremacy and gave it control of most of the world's commerce.

The war against Russia in Crimea (1854-56) and the contests against the native princes in India once again attracted England's attention to the East.

The eastern loanwords were registered in fiction books, biographies and travel books and were mainly commercial. As F. Katamba states, "there are a few loanwords for trade goods which pre-date the Raj, e.g. *copra*, *coir*, *pepper*, *sugar*, *indigo*,

*ginger* and *sandal*. These were indirect borrowings which came into English via Latin, Greek, French, and so on” (1994: 216).

The languages of the Indian subcontinent in what is now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have been an especially important source of verbal imports. India has been in contact with Britain since the seventeenth century, and these centuries of contact have left their mark on English. There are many words borrowed from Indian languages in various areas of the English lexicon. Most of the East Indian loanwords in Modern English came from Hindustani, from Old Sanskrit, which had a great mixture of Arabic and Persian words.

The Indian terms were introduced into English in the second half of the eighteenth century and especially in the nineteenth century and they were mainly textile: e.g. *bandanna* (‘a richly coloured silk handkerchief, with spots left white or yellow’; PDE *bandana*, Hindustani “bandhnu”, ‘a mode of dyeing’. 1752: Long, *Bengal*), *dburrie* (‘a kind of cotton carpet of Indian manufacture’; Hindi “dari”. 1880: Eliot James, *Indian Industries*), *goney* (‘a coarse material used chiefly for sacking and made from the fibres of jute or (in some parts) from sunn-hemp; a sack of this material’; PDE *gunny*, Hindi “goni”, ‘sack’. 1711: Lockyer, *Account of the Trade with India*), *jute* (‘the fibre obtained from the bark of the plants *Corchorus capsularis* and *C. olitorius*, imported chiefly from Bengal, and used in the manufacture of gunny, canvas, bagging, cordage, etc’; Bengali “jhoto”. 1746: *Log of Ship Wake*), *kbakee* (‘dust-coloured; dull brownish yellow, drab; a fabric of this colour now largely employed in the British army for field-uniforms’; PDE *kbaki*, Urdu, ‘dusty’. The noun of the fabric was first registered in English in 1857 (H. B. Edwardes, *Letters*) and that of the colour in 1863 (*Coruh. Magazine*, Jan.), *nainsook* (‘a cotton fabric, a kind of muslin or jaconet of Indian origin; a garment made of this’; Urdu “nainsukh”, from “nain”, ‘the eye’, and “sukh”, ‘pleasure’. 1804: *The Spirit of the Public Journals*), *numdab* (‘a kind of felt or coarse woollen cloth; a saddle-cloth or pad made of this’; Urdu “namda”. 1876: Voyle and Stevenson, *Military Dictionary*), *pajamabs* (‘loose drawers or trousers, usually of silk or cotton, tied round the waist, worn by both sexes amongst the Mohammedans, and adopted by Europeans, especially for night wear’; PDE *pyjamas*, Urdu “pajama”, from “pa’e”, ‘foot’, and “jama”, ‘garment’. 1800: *Miscellaneous Tracts in The Asiatic Annual Register*), *puttie* (‘a long strip of cloth wound spirally round the leg from the ankle to the knee, worn as a protection and support to the leg by sportsmen, soldiers, etc’; PDE *puttee*, Hindi “patti”, ‘band, bandage’. 1875: F. Dew, *Jummoo*

and Kashmir Territories), *tatty* ('a screen or mat, usually made of the roots of the fragrant cuscus grass'; Hindi "tatti". 1792: Williams in *Philosophical Transactions*), and *topee* ('originally applied by Indian natives to the European hat; now specialized in Anglo-Indian, as a name for the sola topi, sola hat or helmet'; PDE *topi*, Hindi "topi". 1835: *The Court Magazine*). According to N. F. Blake (1996: 300), "the main colonial country to provide words for English was India because of the close association of India with Britain. Many different types of word were introduced, including those for [...] dyes like *purree*, for clothes like *pyjamas*,..."

As I. de la Cruz Cabanillas points out, "procedentes de la India, aunque originarias de otras lenguas, nos llegan voces como *bandana*, *bangle*, *bungalow*, *cashmere*, *catamaran*, *cheetah*, *china*, *chintz*,..." (from India, although originating in other languages, come words such as *bandana*,...) (Bernárdez Sanchís et al., 2001: 706).

In the early years of the British colonisation of India, loans reflected the commerce between India and Britain –not surprisingly, since that is what colonizing India was all about. Words for various kinds of Indian textiles, e.g. *calico*, *chintz* and *dungaree* came into English with the goods. In C. M. Millward's opinion, "during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the British successfully vied with the Portuguese, French, and Dutch for control of the Indian sub-continent. As a result of their conquest, the English language acquired many new loanwords. The most important contributor was Hindi" (1996: 287).

A smaller number of loanwords have come from farther East, from languages such as Chinese. The Chinese loanwords, as in other Eastern languages, were also textile: e.g. in the work *Account of the Trade with India* (1711) by Lockyer there are registered the nouns *paunche* ('a soft unbleached kind of Chinese silk'; PDE *pongee*, North Chinese "pun-chi", for Mandarin "pun-ki", 'own loom') and *sysee* ('fine uncoined silver in the form of lumps of various sizes usually having a banker's or assayer's seal stamped on them, used by the Chinese as a medium of exchange'; PDE *sycee*, Chinese "si, sze", 'fine silk').

*Kaolin* ('a fine white clay produced by the decomposition of feldspar, used in the manufacture of porcelain'; French, Chinese "kao-ling", 'name of a mountain north-west of the town of King-tê-chên in North China, whence the material was originally obtained') was a noun that Chambers adopted in *Cyclopaedia* (1727); but it was made known in Europe in 1712 by Father d'Entrecolles.





The loanwords in Modern English came from different countries, that is why, as R. Berndt emphasizes, “the vocabulary of English has sometimes —irritatingly— been described as being ‘cosmopolitan’ in character. It is, no doubt, true that the lexicon of Modern English contains a considerable number of words which were borrowed from other languages” (1989: 67), but B. A. Fennell specifies: “borrowing has become a less important source of new words than in the previous period, although [...] it is still a significant source of lexical enrichment” (2001: 175). And F. Katamba adds: “though less numerous than loans from European languages, words adopted from non-European languages are not insignificant in number. Following increasing contact with peoples from outside Europe from the sixteenth century onwards, growing numbers of words were borrowed from their languages” (1994: 216).

## **Conclusions**

Whenever the need for a word arises following contact with another culture, people could just make one up. But in most cases they do not. It is relatively rare for speakers to create completely new words. When a suitable word exists in another language, the easiest thing to do is to adopt that word rather than to make up an original one from nothing. This is a reason for borrowing.

The hospitality of English to foreign words has often been commented on; indeed, borrowing is the characteristic method whereby this language expands its vocabulary, something which distinguishes it from its near relatives, such as German. Borrowed words from a particular language tend to reflect the nature of the contact, e.g. cultural contact, colonization, religion, trade and so on. Modern English borrowed many non-European words because of its commercial relationships and the expansion of the British Empire. The continued involvement of English-speaking people with the rest of the world meant a continued influx of loanwords from exotic languages, but the number of such words known outside specialist circles is small. English absorbed a huge number of foreign words during this period, partly because of the advance of science and technology, partly because of the development of new political ideals, and partly because of the colonization of large parts of the globe. Colonization led to the

spread of English around the globe and ultimately to its present position as the most widely used language in the world.

As can be observed, the likelihood of being borrowed is not the same for all words. Content words are more likely to be borrowed than function words. And among content words nouns are the most likely candidates for borrowing. In Modern English the most frequent loanwords from the East are textile nouns, as we have pointed out.

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# The Opinion Essay as Example of Discourse Analysis: Rhetorical Assessment

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## ABSTRACT

The argumentative class of texts possesses a certain structure that allows the addressee to recognise the possible controversy of the ideas posed in it, be it for the persuasion of some conflicting view or the mere reflection on what has been uttered. In particular, the opinion essay, as an argumentative exemplar, can be analysed following a rhetorical model regarding a double perspective: the textual analysis of the piece and the contextual assessment, in which some ideological traits can usually be found. To this respect, the student who takes up English for a specific purpose, in this case the analysis of the argumentative discourse, can find in the rhetorical outline that we propose some tools for the depiction of this and other classes of texts he or she may encounter.

*Key words: argumentation, argument, text, context, Rhetorics, rhetorical figure, discourse, essay, class of text.*

## RESUMEN

La clase de textos argumentativa posee una estructura específica que permite al destinatario el reconocimiento de una posible controversia. Este reconocimiento surge a partir de las ideas expuestas, ya sea para la persuasión de alguna opinión en conflicto, ya sea para la mera reflexión. En particular, el ensayo de

opinión puede analizarse siguiendo un patrón retórico que refleja una perspectiva doble: por un lado el análisis textual y, por otro, la valoración del contexto, donde surgen los posibles rasgos ideológicos. Con este propósito, el estudiante que se dedica al inglés para fines específicos y, en concreto, el análisis del discurso argumentativo, puede hallar en el esquema retórico que se propone algunas herramientas útiles para la descripción de esta y de otras clases de textos.

*Palabras clave: argumentación, argumento, texto, contexto, Retórica, figura retórica, discurso, ensayo, clase de texto.*