

Loanwords in Amsterdam: preface

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This special issue of *Linguistics in Amsterdam* is dedicated to loanword adaptation and comprises two articles from ACLC members.

The loanword literature is marked by a strong divide between two theoretical stances, the so-called “phonological” and “perceptual” views. The former holds that loanword adaptation is done by bilingual speakers, who ‘repair’ a phonological surface form in production; the latter holds that loanword adaptations are performed in native perception. Both views share the assumption that phonetics and phonology do not inform each other; however, the contributions in this issue crucially regard perception as phonological (cf. Boersma & Hamann 2009). They assume that the perception process is a mapping from sensory cues to phonological structure, guided by phonotactic knowledge. This obviates the need for the reduplication of phonetics in phonology, which is often seen in formalizations of loanword adaptations.

The contributions in this volume both offer explicit accounts of a specific loanword phenomenon: Hamann and Li treat the borrowing of English onset clusters into Hong Kong Cantonese, and Seinhorst treats the adaptation of the vowel [y] in Russian. Also, both articles make additional points. Hamann and Li propose that diachronic changes in adaptations are due to changes in the perception grammar; Seinhorst contends that visual cues may play a crucial role in loanword perception, and refutes a strictly phonological explanation of the Russian facts.

We hope to show that the gap between the opposing views in the loanword literature can be bridged by regarding perception as grammatical, and invite other authors to explore this hypothesis as well.