

The Smuggled Budgie (Nash to appear)

1. Background



- Budgies:
 - *budgie*: Short for *budgerigar*, borrowed into English from an unspecified Australian NSW language in the 1840s.
 - aka a parakeet.

2. Etymology

- Previous accounts generally claim either *budgerig* ‘good’ from NSW Pidgin or *gijirrigaa* ‘parakeet’ from Gamilaraay as the source of the word, either compounded or ‘misapprehended’.
- Nash proposes a word *bVdjRigaa* from an unspecified NSW language as the source, subsequently influenced by the word *budgerig*.
- Likely early forms, as recorded by Gould, Wall, and Sturt in the 1840’s, are [bVtʃə.ɹiɡa:] (north of Sydney) and [bVdʒə.ɹiɡaŋ] (southwest of Sydney).

- The final nasal is reflected in the form *widjərigon* recorded by Louise Hercus in the 1960's for Wemba Wemba.
 - * If these forms are indeed cognate, this gives evidence that the word did have an initial bilabial rather than a velar, and that the first vowel was not the same as that in NSW Pidgin *budgery*.
- By 1845, the birds had been referred to as *budgerigor* and *budgerry* in English- and French-language press.
- As NSW Pidgin was the source of many loans into Australian English, and *budgery* was one of the most commonly used words in that language, it's likely that the pronunciation of the first two syllables of [bVtʃəɪgɪa:] were reanalyzed by English speakers to reflect the form of that word.
- Once the first three syllables of *budgerigar* were reanalyzed as NSW Pidgin *budgery* 'good', the final syllable was taken to be a separate morpheme, probably meaning 'parrot'.
- Eventually the initial vowel settled on [a].
- By 1935 the form had undergone truncation to *budgie*.
 - Nash says the vowel must have lowered before truncation. Why?

3. The Gamilaraay Puzzle

- The recorded forms in Gamilaraay (Kamilaroi) show an initial velar stop rather than the bilabial: *gijoriga* (1875), *gidgerreegah* (1905), *gidjirrigaa* (2003). Why?
 - Folk etymology within Gamilaraay to dissimilate their form from that used by English speakers?
 - Relatedly, how was Gould able to elicit a term for a bird which was apparently new to the region?
- 'there was no suggestion in newspapers or elsewhere during the decades of popularity that the b-initial form was in error or at variance with Aboriginal speech.'
 - Even if they were aware of this fact, would English-speakers have cared?

4. A More General Theory of Lexical Borrowing

- The Law of Hobson-Jobson (Morris 1989):
 - “When a word comes from a foreign language, those who use it, not understanding it properly, give a twist to the word or to some part of it, from the hospitable desire to make the word at home in its new quarters, no regard, however, being paid to the sense. The most familiar instance in English is *crayfish* from the French *écrevisse*, though it is well known that a crayfish is not a fish at all.”
 - But this understates the extent to which speakers do try to preserve at least some meaning.
- The borrowing of *budgerigar* had two simultaneous components:
 - The loanblend *budgery-garr* was created in NSW Pidgin by English speakers, replacing the first three syllables of the original word with the existing item *budgery*, and the final syllable with the nonce morpheme *-garr* (which may reflect the word for ‘parrot’ in other NSW languages).
 - The same form was borrowed into these same speakers’ English.
- Nash distinguishes this from a folk etymology, which he says is a diachronic process on existing words whose source has been forgotten, whereas this is a synchronic process on a new word.
- Etymologists must look at all the available attestations, not just those in the linguistic literature (ie wordlists), to account for word origins.

