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THE ETYMOLOGY OF INTERNATIONALISMS

Evidence from German and Slovak

Abstract In the etymological information for a word in a dictionary, the first question to be answered is whether the word is a borrowing or the result of word formation. Here, we consider this question for internationalisms ending in *-ation* in German and in *-ácia* in Slovak. In German, *-ation* is a suffix that attaches to verbs in *-ieren*. For these verbs, it is in competition with *-ung*. In Slovak, *-ácia* is a suffix that attaches to bases of Latin or Greek origin. The corresponding verbs are often backformations. Most Slovak verbs also have a nominalization in *-nie*. In order to investigate to what extent the nouns in *-ation* or *-ácia* are borrowings or derived from the corresponding verbs in German and Slovak, we took a random sample of English nouns in *-ation* for which OED gives a corresponding verb. For this sample, we checked whether the cognate noun in *-ation* or *-ácia* is attested in standard dictionaries and in corpora. Then we did the same for the corresponding verbs and the nouns in *-ung* or *-nie*. Finally, we checked the frequency of these words in DEREKO for German and SNK for Slovak. On this basis, we found evidence that *-ation* in German has a slightly different status to *-ácia* in Slovak. This status affects the relationship to the corresponding verbs and to the nouns in *-ung* or *-nie*. Such generalizations are important as background information for specifying etymological information in dictionaries, especially for languages where first attestations dates are not readily available.

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