

## ENGLISH IN ROMANIA – FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

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### ***Abstract***

*The article presents the influence of English language worldwide and especially on the Romanian environment. “It has become the central language of communication in business, politics, administration, science and academia, as well as being the dominant language of globalised advertising and popular culture” (Held et al, 1999: 346). In Romania, English was and is used today as a tool to accelerate the timing and participation in the global economy. Its penetration was achieved following the acceptance of economic realities and the need for rapid synchronization. English remains the most studied foreign language in schools and universities in Romania. Linguistic globalization is not an internal phenomenon of language, but the result of a deliberate linguistic attitude, strictly determined by economic interests.*

**Keywords:** linguistic globalization, communication, education system, language learning, technology

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### ***Preliminary Considerations***

Globalization is, undoubtedly, a process generated by capitalism development, a process that has gained momentum especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union as a viable alternative to removing or resizing old interstate economic organizations. Today, this phenomenon has ramifications and effects in the structures of political life, of the environment, of culture and language.

In linguistics, the idea of globalization has emerged as a direct result of the situation in the economy, therefore it illustrates a particular facet of the relationship between society and communication needs. The concept of linguistic globalization must be understood as a deliberate acceptance of a common means of communication in international economic relations. This means of communication necessary in the globalisation process of contemporary economy has a number of features required by the particular type of communication where it is used. The chosen language for communication in economic relations, in this process of globalization, should be limited to the usage of certain registers belonging to that

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selected language. Thus, only those means that meet the requirements of a concise, accurate communication will be taken over.

The acceptance of a natural language as a unique tool for communication appears today as an objective need of contemporary social life. This understanding means “accepting a single language that works in the field of communication, in which case it should exceed the competitive mentality that implies the idea of linguistic supremacy” (Beck, 2011: 55).

Due to circumstantial reasons, created in the process of economic, social, technical and scientific evolution of society, the language of globalization is English. English is used worldwide in all the specialized registers such as economic, legal, technical, journalistic. It became the main language of communication and it became the main language of communication and “continues to entrench this dominance in a selfreinforcing process. It has become the central language of communication in business, politics, administration, science and academia, as well as being the dominant language of globalised advertising and popular culture” (Held et al, 1999: 346). English is the language of computers and it is also used in safety procedures, such as air traffic control. "Over two thirds of the world's scientists write in English, three-quarters of international mail is written in English and 80% of the information is stored in English" (Crystal, 1997: 358).

Another aspect is the dominance of English in books translation. Thus, the subject of translation into other languages is the overwhelming proportion of books originally written in English. "In a sense, this domination is not surprising at all. The use of a language is closely related to the power of the state. English is the language of the two modern hegemonic powers, Great Britain and the U.S.A. Moreover, this power is exercised in all areas of human life: economic, political, military, and not least cultural" (Held, 2004: 391).

The reasons that led to the overwhelming influence of English are obvious; it is clear that the rapid development of information technology and financial-banking sector was first in the U.S., therefore in an English-speaking space. A good example is Japan, interested, after 1945, in the economic recovery, in high and rapid economic performances in order to have a leading place in the world economy. As the interest in promoting their own language would be delayed or limited, the pace of economic development at a time when, after the war, the economy needed an accelerated pace of restoration and synchronization, and the acquisition of supremacy, Japanese officials accepted the communication in English, initiated measures to extend the study of English in schools, thus allowing direct access to information, and to conquer markets, even within American society. Regarding Japan, “the interest in economic development, achieving performances that can deal with competition, managed to prevail over linguistic and cultural pride” (Stiglitz, 2010: 85). Another example, illustrating unprejudiced acceptance of English as the language of communication, in the technical-

economic field, can be Israel, especially due to its financial power, but also that only by learning the language of those you do business with, can you accomplish a real financial prosperity.

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### ***The Influence of English Language on the Romanian Environment***

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An illustration of the fact that the objective necessity of accepting a single language of communication in the process of globalization, which is required under the pressure of economic development, is also demonstrated by the situation in Central and Eastern Europe in general and that of Romania, in particular. It is well known that the modernization of the Romanian language in the nineteenth century occurred under the influence of the French language. The percentage of words of French origin in contemporary Romanian is between 29-38%; most researchers agree that adapting these words was relatively easy, given the Latin structure inherited by the two languages. By accepting, after 1989, Romania in the group of French-speaking countries, it is officially recognized the close affinities between the two peoples and languages. And yet, in Romania, English was and is used today as a tool to accelerate the timing and participation in the global economy. Its penetration was achieved following the acceptance of economic realities and the need for rapid synchronization. Access to computer technology could not be done in an effective manner than through direct access to sources of information; a French intermediary would complicate and delay the process and the costs would increase substantially. The phenomenon was relatively quickly perceived by the Romanian education system, providing a deep transformation of its structure.

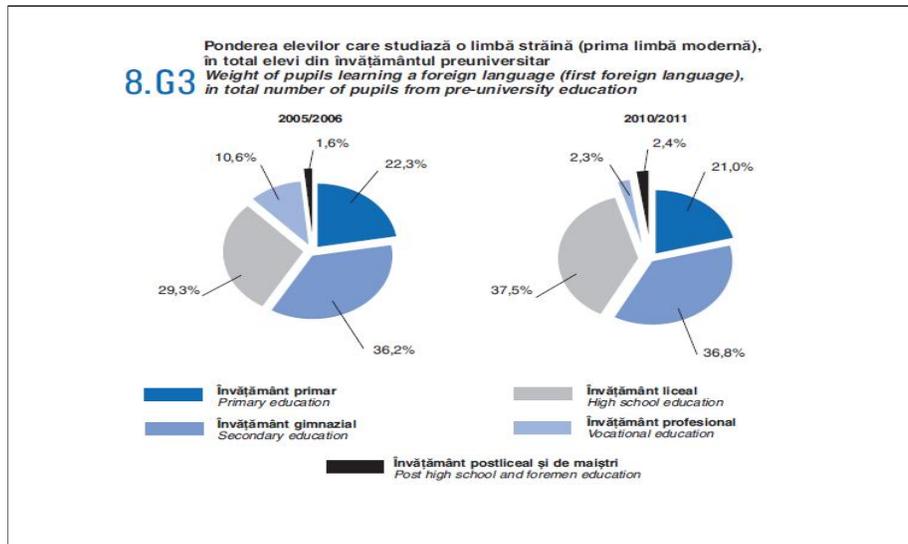
Since 2000, English ranks first in the hierarchy of primary school pupils' options. This is due, on the one hand, "to the acceleration of the integration phenomenon in the general trend of Romania economic globalization" (Chirovici, 2010: 98), and on the other hand, to the Romanian education capacity to provide English teachers able to train the younger generation in this direction. The change in rank in the statistics of students situation that study a foreign language is a social phenomenon that began in the 8th decade of the last century with the introduction of language learning in primary education and the creation of classes with intensive foreign language teaching system (mainly English, French, Spanish).

The process lasted nearly a decade, due to the need to prepare the teachers. If the number of students studying English today has come to exceed that of primary school students studying French, showing a shift in the balance of forces between the two languages in the Romanian education, the slower evolution process must be explained by the fact that French still prevails in rural teaching, because most of language teachers know this language.

English remains the most studied foreign language in schools and universities in Romania. Romanian statistics try to follow the upward trend in Europe. In 31 countries, 90% of pupils learn English and in other 13, English is the first

mandatory language. In Romania high schools during the 2010-2011 school year, 95% of students studied English, 86% French, 10% German and only 2% Russian. The study of foreign languages in our country begins around the age of 8 years.

Figure 1 presents the weight of pupils learning the first foreign language, from pre-university education in 2005/2006 compared to 2010/2011. As we can see from the pie chart, in 2005/2006 the percentages are the following: primary education 22.3%, secondary education 36.2%, high school 29.3%, vocational education 10.6%, post high school and foreman education 1.6%. In 2010/2011 the situation improved slightly for secondary education, high school education and post high school and foreman education; for primary education the percentage is lower 21% and for secondary education we notice a dramatic decrease from 10.6% to 2.3% in 2011.



**Figure 1. Anuarul Statistic al României 2011, National Institute of Statistics**

Figure 2 shows the situation of pupils enrolled in pre-university education, by foreign language studied. As we can see from the table, in 2010/2011 the first language studied is English, followed by French, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian etc. For the second foreign language studied, the first in rank is French, followed by English, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian etc.

**8.7** Elevii înscriși în învățământul preuniversitar, după studiul limbilor moderne  
Pupils enrolled in pre-university education, by foreign language studied

număr / number

	Prima limbă modernă First foreign language						A doua limbă modernă Second foreign language						
	2006/ 2006	2007/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2006/ 2006	2007/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2619377</b>	<b>2641738</b>	<b>2480878</b>	<b>2413768</b>	<b>2372518</b>	<b>2313361</b>	<b>1516772</b>	<b>1550670</b>	<b>1632878</b>	<b>1631885</b>	<b>1673000</b>	<b>1682189</b>
Limbă engleză	1483773	1513882	1538900	1582729	1610931	1619742	821616	609982	619795	577506	541896	518541	English language
Limbă franceză	1056782	956428	877073	792784	707378	644927	738556	789549	863217	909998	988818	1022121	French language
Limbă germană	64936	59031	54405	48981	44250	39943	119213	121681	126400	123180	122827	121243	German language
Limbă rusă	5113	3737	2426	1748	2632	969	23070	15080	9831	6931	5889	5313	Russian language
Limbă spaniolă	5062	5048	4427	4784	4891	4794	6048	5438	5680	6288	6152	6576	Spanish language
Limbă italiană	3223	3163	3253	2385	2101	2680	8039	8595	7889	7641	7290	8062	Italian language
Limbă greacă	108	74	26	26	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Greek language
Limbă japoneză	135	132	134	127	115	117	-	22	-	47	34	24	Japanese language
Limbă portugheză	235	230	215	204	194	179	84	82	96	131	87	54	Portuguese language
Limbă turcă	-	13	19	-	-	-	148	151	-	283	217	255	Turkish language

**Figure 2. Anuarul statistic al României 2011, National Institute of Statistics**

Romania has made progresses in language learning in primary education. Whether in 2002, 60% of students had learned a foreign language, in 2011, the percentage reached 70% (in comparison to Luxembourg where 83% of children in primary education knew not one but two foreign languages). Our country cannot compare with Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Iceland, where 13% of children know two languages. Statistics are very weak in the knowledge of more than two foreign languages to students in primary school. If, in 2002, not a single student knew a third language, in 2011 we reached 3%.

A common problem encountered in Europe and in Romania is that time is limited for language teaching in primary schools. Only in secondary and especially high school the number of hours is higher. Generally, less than 10% of the actual time spent teaching is used for language teaching. Whether in the primary school, Romanian students have about 116-117 hours per year allocated to language learning, especially in secondary and high school, the time reaches 695 hours per year, according to the European Commission. Another problem of foreign language teaching in Romania is that it does not focus on spelling. Teachers are concerned to teach students to listen, speak and read in that language, but less to write. A feature of Romanian education is that students take tests in modern languages in order to be admitted to schools/high schools/universities that teach only in that foreign language.

Larger scale use of English in our country was determined, after 1989, by a range of economic issues arising from the liberalization of trade, therefore it was directly caused by the same phenomenon of linguistic globalization. In the last 10 years, in production and trade, we have witnessed and are witnessing multinationals set up in the Romanian geographical space. The advertising they make in the recruitment process shows the unreserved use of English. Thus, very often, job vacancies are made in a foreign language, and most of them are in English.

Advertising in English is primarily made in the job offers, where the employer is interested in a certain educational level. In this way, the employer operates a first selection, because only those who know English will respond to the advertisement. In the employers job offers from the current Romanian mass media, we can find several different situations in relation to the use of English:

a) the job advertisement is written entirely in English, and it may belong both to multinational companies and companies whose owner does not come from an English area, but uses this means of communication as a proof of their acceptance in the process of economic globalization.

b) the advertisement is written mostly in Romanian, and the job position is in English, which shows that Romanian and foreign companies, regardless of the linguistic area of origin, adopted all an organization model of economic units considered powerful and apparently accepted internationally today. The adoption of this model in the economic structure of firms, or productive and financial-banking units led implicitly to accept English names for job positions (*account manager, unit manager, office desk person, senior/ junior manager, treasury manager, PR manager, service engineer, key account executive, salesman, market developer, bodyguard, mobile application developer, business intelligence data engineer, business intelligence data base administrator, system administrator*).

The acceptance of English language when it comes to the name of the organizational structures of enterprises is therefore an area where globalization is visible in the Romanian economic space. "After abandoning the centralized communist economic structures, internal organization of firms and Romanian companies synchronize with the most popular structures in the world economy" (Negreponi, 2010:17); as they have a Western model of English / American type, job names use English terms.

Linguistic globalization is not an internal phenomenon of language, but the result of a deliberate linguistic attitude, strictly determined by economic interests. As a consequence of information technology development, we are also witnessing an avalanche of scientific and technical terms that are used in many languages in their English version. Such terms as: *businessman, barter, broker, dealer, computer, marketing, management, manager, dumping, know-how, trend* - are used today without even translating them. This phenomenon is particularly interesting, as it occurs in unrelated languages, revealing a new dimension of contact among languages.

One aspect concerns the neologism category; "there are certain areas in which the English vocabulary imposed and entered into circulation in both written and spoken language" (Brezizinski, 2007: 67); an example in this respect is the sports terminology where English words imposed. Another aspect is the use of English words today, especially in the language of young persons: *ok, cool, fresh, like*. This

represents a means of behavioral internationalization and a way to erase social and national differences.

The official reaction against anglicisms was originally one of rejection and power and it was manifested, first, in the French-speaking area. It is well known today the work of Rene Etiemble – *Parlez-vous français?* (1967); he was a defender of French language being against the anglicization of this language. It was also a useless attempt of officials in France to ban by law the spread of English words. Time will pass until we get to ask ourselves, more or less rhetorically, whether anglicisms are a danger or an enrichment for our vocabulary. We must recognize, however, that the aversion against anglicisms was general and had very different causes depending on the historical events experienced by a nation or another. Development of high technology and informatics led to a natural penetration of English origin neologisms.

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### ***Conclusions***

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From the above analysis, it occurs that both linguistic globalization and the spread of anglicisms in different languages are current phenomena that tend to internationalize. On the one hand, linguistic globalization should be interpreted as a consequence of economic globalization in terms of verbal exchanges that led to the creation of new communication situations that require the use of a single language among economic partners. On the other hand, choosing the English language as a sole language of communication is a historical phenomenon. Linguistic globalization can be reported, theoretically, to bilingualism, seen not in terms of its collective aspect, but as unique, because in economic relations and trade, “parties are interested in partner's knowledge of English only as far as they need to ensure an effective communication” (Leclerc, 2008: 45). Linguistic globalization, when acting in a narrower or wider field, is not mandatory to have an impact on the language adopted.

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