

**LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF LEXICAL
BORROWINGS FROM ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN**

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Abstract

The present article focuses on linguistic and cultural dimensions of lexical borrowings from English into Romanian language. It is increasingly clear that English has a great influence upon Romanian, but when it comes to the necessity of English borrowings (especially English words that preserve their spelling and/ or their pronunciation) in Romanian, there are Romanian speakers (including Romanian linguists) who are very reluctant to accept the borrowings. However, nobody can deny at least two of the merits of lexical borrowings from English: internationality and re-Latinization of Romanian.

Keywords: lexical borrowings, Anglicism, Romanian language, Latinization, re-Latinization

Introduction

English influences languages worldwide, and Romanian doesn't make an exception. English borrowings in the Romanian language have become more and more numerous nowadays when the whole Romanian society experiences various types of changes especially from an economic, social, and cultural point of view. This influence has raised different reactions among Romanian speakers and even among specialists. Sim (2007: 989) speaks about a deliberate "unidirectional influence", consisting of "livresque" borrowings and about a bi-directional spontaneous influence resulting from the regional contacts of communities that speak different languages.

This article aims to bring forth several aspects related to the influence of English on the Romanian language. The first section of our study provides a brief presentation of the fields in which borrowings from English are more and more widespread, as well as on how their presence influences Romanian. The second section tackles the cultural issues involved in adopting words from English and presents some of the reasons why there are instances when words borrowed from English are preferred to their Romanian equivalents.

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Linguistic Dimensions of Lexical Borrowings from English

English words have invaded many areas of Romanian language. But to what an extent are English borrowings necessary? We agree that they are necessary as long as they fill some word gaps in the field of politics, economics (marketing, finance and banking, accounting, management), culture, everyday life, sports, mass-media, entertainment and others (Chelaru-Murăruș, 2006). There are lots of words that were once called “luxury” words, but nowadays are being used quite frequently by common Romanian speakers (e.g. *airbag, barter, brand, briefing, casting, chat, discount, hacker, lifting, link, live, look, mall, net, online, password, roller, shake, site, stretch, talk-show, thriller, top, workshop* etc.). It is this frequency that sometimes dictates their inclusion in some important Romanian lexicographic papers like DOOM-2, even if they haven’t been (fully) adapted to the Romanian language system. However, “their inclusion in DOOM-2 should not be perceived as a recommendation for all of them” or a “giving up” in front of the “invasion of anglicisms” (Zafiu, 2005). This should be interpreted as concern for a correct and livresque Romanian. Words like *aftershave, brand, dealer, mouse, make-up* have already been having, for some years, a wide oral and written circulation and, on the other hand, Romanian speakers can use the dictionary to find or check their correct pronunciation and spelling (Zafiu, 2005).

English borrowings have several advantages over Romanian words. Besides their monoreferential and monosemantic dimension, anglicisms are breviloquent and are used internationally (Stoichițoiu Ichim, 2006: 14). “Quasiinternationalised Englezisms” belong to different domains, but they also have “non-specialized meanings” (Preda, 1992: 590) (e.g.: *briefing, draft, new-entry, panel, self-made man/woman*). There is already a classification of areas where Romanian anglicisms have entered as a result of globalization and have acquired an international dimension (Stoichițoiu Ichim, 2006: 16-18):

- the field of communication, advertising and public relations: *news magazine, breaking news, talk-show, head-hunting, banner, no comment* (e.g.: “La *head hunting* apelează 41,8% dintre directorii de resurse umane” (ZF. 16.06.2010, Jumătate din companii...)³, “un *banner* este în pericol să se prăbușească” (ZF. 18.01.2013, Un copac...);
- economic-financial terminology: *management, rating, cash, card, duty-free, teleshopping, broker, dealer, leasing*, to which we add *catering, holding, barter, exchange, discount, roaming* or terms that are understood with difficulty or completely misunderstood by the general public as well as those in the following examples: “prețuri de *dumping*” (A1. 04.10.2008), “punem punct ediției de azi a *closing bell*” (TMC. 29.02.2008), “firmă *crewing*” (A3. 30.05.2008), “compania de *factoring*”

³ In the present article each quote from written or spoken Romanian media is followed by the exact media source (the acronym of a newspaper, a public / private TV channel, a radio channel), the date, and the beginning of the title (for articles or reports).

- vrea să-și dubleze cifra de afaceri” (TMC. 08.12.2007), “program *buy-back*” (ReTV. 21.03.2009), “trebuie să depășiți costurile *over-run*” (TMC. 28.03.2008), “sistem de *scoring*” (ReTV. 15.05.2008);
- technical terms: “*kit* pentru răceală și gripă” (B1TV. 08.03.2009), *top gear*, *off-road*, *ATV*, *walkman*, *fax* (e.g.: “eliminarea *ATV*-urilor de pe șosele și introducerea dispozitivelor alcoollock în autoturisme” (WS. 19.04.2013, Noi schimbări...));
 - tourism terminology: *all-inclusive*, *charter*, *voucher*: “cinci nopți de cazare la hotel de trei stele, în sistem *all inclusive*” (WS. 15.03.2013, Unde îți faci...), “Blue-air, prima companie de *smart-flying*” (ReTV. 06.02.2009), “cele mai căutate produse sunt cele de *camping*” (ProTV. 03.07.2007);
 - informatics terminology: *e-library*, *provider*, *hacker*, *link*, *messenger*, *stick*, *cyberspace*, *icon*, *website*, *homepage*, “online shopping” (TVR1. 17.04.2008), “așa cum este prezentat într-un *slide* al emisiunii” (A3. 18.09.2008), “experiență mai mică în *e-shopping*” (Romant. 24.02.2009), “componente *hardware*” (Romant. 24.02.2009), “logout la Logan” (A3. 27.03.2008), “atacuri de *phishing*” (TVR1. 17.04.2008), “*soft-ul* care ne va gestiona pensia” (TMC. 11.08.2007);
 - artistic field: *western*, “*stand-up comedian*” (ReTV. 07.11.2007), *fan*, *star*, *jazz*, *casting*, *body-painting* dancing styles like *quick step*, *rap*, *rock*, *blues*, *charleston*, *step*;
 - sports domain: “suntem un oraș de *champions’ league*” (B1TV. 03.07.2007), “al patrulea în top *all-time*” (ReTV. 25.03.2009), *wrestling*, *windsurfing*;
 - job titles: *CEO* (Chief Executive Officer), *VP* (Vice President), *hair-stylist*, *designer* (e.g.: “Paul Otellini, președinte și *CEO* al Intel”, CAP. 17.04.2013, Venituri de...);
 - the education and research field: *Master*, *grant*;
 - fashion terminology: “ținută *office*” (Romantica 20.05.2008), “renunț la *modelling*” (Romant. 10.08.2007), “cu timpul a devenit o adevărată *fashion maker*” (Romant. 31.08.2007), “medalioane cât mai *flashy*” (TVRCultural. 11.08.2007), “s-au îmbrăcat *casual*” (ProTV. 11.08.2007), “*fashion-ul* romilor” (A2. 10.09.2007), “geanta este *fake*” (A2. 10.09.2007);
 - gastronomy: *topping*, *whisky*, *cocktail*, *shake*, *lime*.

In addition to the above-mentioned categories we would like to mention *the field of politics*, which is full of such instances: *summit*, *infringement*, *exit-poll*: “Ungaria este pe punctul declanșării *infringementului*” (ReTV. 13.02.2008), “rezultatele *exit-poll*-urilor” (WS. 11.12.2012, Cum comentează), as well as *the domaine of medical sciences*: *lifting*, *by-pass* etc. (“*lifting* facial”, WS. 26.03.2013)

However, the English language has an important Latin component, which means that English borrowings continue the process of the re-Latinization of the Romanian language. This is one reason why we should not be scared of the large number of English words; as they do not make our language lose its identity, but on the contrary, revive its true origin (Sim, 2007: 988). In the English economic terminology there are a variety of Latinisms which get to be part of the worldwide code for economic communication in domains like accounting or commerce: *ad valorem*, *agenda*, *bona fide*, *bonus*, *cum interest*, *curriculum vitae*, *de facto*, *de iure*, *ex capital*, *exit*, *item*, *per share*, *post-sale*, *premium*, *pro forma*, *pro-rata temporis*, *sine die* apar în exprimări precum: “90% din consumatori, mai puțin cei din segmentul *premium*” (ZF. 30.06.2010, Producătorii de vin...); „Nu suntem împotriva ideii de *exit* din business” (ZF. 29.03.2010, Cum au ajuns...); “acciza *ad valorem* (23% din prețul maxim de vânzare cu amănuntul)” (ZF, 16.04.2009, Românii dau...); “Există în ciuda concurenței, un spirit «*bona fide*» al breslei” (WS. 14.12.2006, Provocarea...); “există grupuri interesate ca legislația falimentului să fie greoaie astfel ca întreprinderile de stat să nu dea *de iure* faliment deși, unele dintre ele, sunt falimentare *de facto*” (ZF, 8.06.2000, Lecțiile...); “rezultatele *pro-forma* ale consolidării” (ZF, 14.12.2009, Retailerul online...); “împozitul se determină pe bază de *pro-rata temporis*” (CAP, 14.04.2005, Cum se...).

Cultural Dimensions of Lexical Borrowings from English

In a series of articles on the adoption of English words into Romanian, Rodica Zafiu shows that “the influence of English on the Romanian language is so powerful and visible that it overshadows any other source of lexical borrowings, or semantic and phraseological loan translations”⁴ (Zafiu, 2001, our translation). Among the fields which are the most exposed to this influence, she mentions finance, technology, entertainment and trade, where English words are increasingly used in spoken and written language.

A possible reason why lexical borrowings are preferred to their Romanian equivalents in trade for example is represented by the fact that the use of English names lends the products they refer to superior qualities. This is the case of the term “second-hand”, which designates goods that are sold after having been used by other consumers. Compared to Romanian expressions referring to such products, which often focus on the low-quality of the respective reused products, the English term is perceived as neutral and technical. Its interpretations are closely connected to its Western origin: the adoption of the term is not simply a lexical one, but also one based on the idea that unlike in traditional societies – as the Romanian one was during the communist regime – in modern Western societies

⁴ Original text: “influența englezei asupra limbii române e atât de puternică și de vizibilă, încât pune în umbră orice altă sursă de împrumuturi lexicale, de calcuri semantice și frazeologice” (Zafiu, 2001)

consumption patterns are different, and people are wealthy enough to buy new things while previously purchased ones are still functional. Consequently, goods that are resold are not as old as they used to be in the past. By adopting the foreign term, traders want to give Romanian consumers the impression that the consumption patterns and product qualities it describes in Western societies can also apply to second-hand products sold in Romania (Zafiu, 2001).

There are two main trends in the use of the expression. On the one hand, Rodica Zafiu notices that the general tendency is to keep the original spelling of the word, as well as its original pronunciation. On the other, she shows that the original meaning of the term has expanded, as in Romanian it refers not only to used products, but also to the shops where they can be found. When used to designate the latter, the word changes its form, and is often used in the plural. Another alteration that can be noticed is represented by the abbreviation of the expression: there are frequent examples when only the first word of the expression is used. All these prove that Romanian users have not simply adopted the term, but also adapted it, changing its form and assigning new meanings to it.

Arthur Beyrer claims that the adoption of foreign words into Romanian language – which is in his opinion one of the most obvious outcomes of interactions with other cultures – is a normal process, which originated centuries ago, long before concerns with the influence of English – especially American English – started being expressed. Furthermore, he shows that unlike previous periods, when lexical borrowings were unidirectional, starting from the twentieth century such exchanges became more complex, as the evolution of communication technologies facilitated people's access to a variety of different cultures, allowing them to select and mix elements coming from multiple sources. However, it is true, that despite the wide range of choices available, the adoption of Anglo-American terms holds a dominant position. The areas where the presence of these terms is noticeable are varied, ranging from political, economic, financial or technological fields to the language of sports, fashion, entertainment or gastronomy or to everyday discussions. However, Beyrer states one cannot speak about complete invasion of anglicisms in Romanian. Firstly, there are still areas such as religion which resist the influence of the English language. Secondly, while younger generations are eager to embrace the use of English terms, it is more difficult for older ones to learn these words and to adopt them.

There are two main perspectives one should consider when analyzing the impact of Anglo-American lexical imports. The first one focuses on the benefits of adopting new words in an effort to modernize language by introducing structures that would best illustrate contemporary contexts and facilitate communication with people from other countries. Thus, according to Beyrer:

Leaving behind the unfortunate “wooden language”, we have witnessed without any regrets a real communicative revolution. Present-day Romanian differs

considerably from the Romanian of the years 1944-1945. In the last two decades, speakers have transformed it into a modernized tool, fitted to the European environment and to the requirements for the accession to the Union. The imports of Anglo-American elements contribute to this general opening.⁵ (Beyrer, 2009, our translation)

Representing one of the many dimensions of globalization, Americanization of language through the import of words and expressions in English is described by Beyrer as “a veritable avalanche that cannot be stopped”⁶ (Beyrer, 2009, our translation). Consequently, he considers that opposing the invasion of English terms into Romanian would have no effects.

Nevertheless, there are two aspects he perceives as disturbing. Firstly, it is difficult to understand why there are situations when English terms are preferred to their Romanian equivalents, which refer to exactly the same aspects of social life. Secondly, many of those who promote the use of such terms do not take into consideration the fact that large numbers of Romanians are still unprepared to be exposed to such a variety of foreign terms. Referring to this issue, Beyrer states that:

*What is annoying is that the receiver is left to deal all alone with the heterogeneous mass of imports: stalking, beach movies, loser. The tumultuous city life lures you with coffee-to-go, cut-and-go, promotions, and all kinds of advertisements. Still, in my opinion allowing the uninitiated majority to be bombarded like this is callous and careless.*⁷ (Beyrer, 2009, our translation)

One of the ways in which the adoption of foreign words would cause less confusion is by providing their Romanian equivalent, so that even people who are not familiar with the respective foreign language understand what the new words refer to.

Conclusions

Even if there are English borrowings that may be considered (by some Romanian speakers or even linguists) unnecessary in Romanian, we believe that their usefulness will prove itself in time, because only if they are really useful, and fill

⁵ Original text: “Fără păreri de rău, lăsând în urmă nefasta "limbă de lemn", am asistat la o reală descătușare comunicativă. Româna actuală s-a distanțat considerabil de româna anilor 1944-1945. În ultimele două decenii, vorbitorii au transformat-o într-un mediu modernizat, de talie europeană, corespunzător exigențelor apartenenței la Uniune. Importurile de elemente anglo-americane contribuie la această deschidere generală.” (Beyrer 2009: Ne americanizăm?)

⁶ Original text: “adevărată avalanșă care nu poate fi respinsă” (Beyrer 2009: Ne americanizăm?)

⁷ Original text: “Supărătoare este lăsarea adresantului singur-singurel în fața importurilor venite de-a valma: stalking, beach movies, loser. Tumultuoasa viață urbană te îmbie cu coffee-to-go, cut-and-go, cu promotions, reclame fel de fel. Este totuși, după mine, o nesimțire, o obrăznicie ca majoritatea neinițiată să fie bombardată așa.” (Beyrer 2009: Ne americanizăm?)

some word gaps in Romanian they will pass the time test. We acknowledge that one of the main strengths of English borrowings is their international dimension, and as one can easily see in the examples provided above, they are present in various fields: communication, tourism, informatics, sports, education etc. Although Anglo-Saxon borrowings have raised concerns even among some linguists, they do not represent a danger and do not threaten the Latin dimension of our language, since many of them are Latin themselves. On the contrary, we consider many anglicisms could represent an opportunity, allowing Romanian to become a language that is capable of expressing concepts, facts, ideas that have an international scope.

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Abbreviations

- A1 – "Antena 1" TV channel
A2 – "Antena 2" TV channel
A3 – "Antena 3" TV channel

B1TV – “B1TV” TV channel
CAP – “Capital” magazine
ProTV – “ProTV” TV channel
Romant. – “Romantica” TV channel
ReTV – “Realitatea TV” TV channel
TMC – “The Money Channel” TV channel
TVR1 – “TVR1” public TV channel
TVRC – “TVR Cultural” public TV channel
WS – “Wall-Street”
ZF – “Ziarul financiar”

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