

## ANGLICISMS IN VARIOUS TYPES OF COMMUNICATION - AN AWARENESS RAISING EXERCISE

**Yolanda-Mirela Catelly**

**Assoc. Prof., PhD, Politehnica University Bucharest**

*Abstract: In the contemporary world, with the planet turning into a global village, a context crossed in all directions by various forms and patterns of open communication, and with English terms penetrating massively into the lexical treasures of numerous nations and cultures, it has become a must for researchers and teachers to try to provide educated support to the young generations in understanding such phenomena and to develop an appropriate mentality and attitude towards them. Therefore, the paper aim is firstly to comparatively analyze the types of anglicisms penetrating the Romanian language lately, in domains such as IT, business, fashion, from the perspective of the causes of their borrowing, and secondly, to approach the sensitive aspects connected with the proper attitude/mentality that should underlie their well-justified acceptance in the language, particularly as far as the young generations are concerned. The standpoint that is maintained in the study is that Romanian language native speakers should be determined to understand that their attitude towards the dilemma 'use or abuse' of anglicisms will have to be solved by understanding the specificity of each domain where neologisms of English origin are met, and by consequently attuning it. As didactic support to this point of view, a series of awareness raising tasks are provided as examples, with a view to sensitizing tertiary education engineering students towards the issue at hand.*

*Keywords: communication, anglicisms, awareness raising tasks, didactics of English, tertiary education*

### **1. Paper background and aim**

All studies focusing on the issue of the penetration of words of English origin into the national lexis of countries today begin by emphasizing the role of English at the present time, its massive spread all over the planet as a *lingua franca*, as well as the various types of attitudes of local linguists and specialized fora in accepting this phenomenon, or, on the contrary, strongly opposing it by different measures, going up to legislating terminology and even attitudes – see the French example, for instance.

Consequently, it is the role of language researchers, who may assume the 'hat' of teachers as well, to study the facets and implications of these circumstances, particularly over the younger generations they educate. Certainly, as often stressed in the literature of the field, language is a living organism, and, on the other hand, mentality is one of the most difficult components of any human's profile to shape. Hence, we maintain, a mentality formation and development approach as the one we are trying to design in this study is quite demanding, as it requires professionalism, open-mindedness and, equally important, patience and perseverance.

The quite rich presence of neologisms of English origin - usually called *anglicisms* - in numerous other languages has been ascertained lately by a plethora of studies, both at national and at international, generally comparative, level. Suffice to examine the substantial lexicographic work appeared after 2000 (Görlach, 2001), with the first comparative approaches, in an attempt to establish main similarities and differences. It is pioneering work covering 16 languages, including Romanian, whose main role is to encourage specialists to attentively examine further some/all of the following:

- the reasons why such borrowings take place,
- the principles of accommodating them to the host language,
- the attitude towards such neologisms etc.

In answer, as far as the manner in which anglicisms are received in Romanian, there was immediate response (Zafiu, 2002). Some of the views in this study underline the following main lines of investigation:

- there are similar features and phenomena underlying the borrowing process in most languages, mostly in terms of the 'stylistic distribution' of modern anglicisms in two types of registers, viz. the technical and the colloquial ones,
- there is a generalized tendency today of preserving the integrity of the English borrowed terms in both spelling and, as far as possible, in pronunciation,
- as to the relationship between 'purism and tolerance', there is a general feeling of apprehension related to the 'invasion' of anglicisms, with local differences in terms of steps taken in limiting it, with explanations determined by local traditions and history.

Moreover, the same team of authors (Görlach, 2002a; Görlach, 2002b) carried out two important works, the former of bibliographic value, while the latter providing the first coherent set of correlated answers regarding the effects of English on the 16 host languages, including Romanian, discussing the incorporation process patterns in terms of pronunciation, spelling and possible transformations and use. To add substance to the dictum *finis coronat opus*, the same team (Görlach, 2003) summarized the four groups of Germanic, Slavic, Romance and other languages research on English loanwords, thus providing a comprehensive background for further studies in the field of the lexical impact of borrowings on each language and culture.

Therefore, it is this paper double aim to (i) analyze some typical examples of anglicisms that have penetrated the Romanian language over the last three decades or so, in domains such as IT, business, fashion, taking into consideration the reasons for their occurrence, and (ii) launch a debate concerning the most appropriate attitude and/or mentality to be developed as to their well-justified acceptance or avoidance in our language, focusing in particular on the position of the younger generations in this respect.

By the didactic perspective which is adopted in the study, it is to be hoped that certain paths towards solving the *use vs abuse* dilemma in terms of anglicisms in Romanian in an educated manner by applying an awareness raising exercise could be created by getting the engineering students in the described context to realize the specific needs in each domain of human endeavour where such neologisms are encountered.

## **2. On anglicisms in Romanian – viewpoints, attitudes, perspectives**

After 1989, in the newly created political, social and economic context, a strong tendency of penetration and acceptance of anglicisms occurred. The phenomenon has been analyzed from different angles by a range of authors, each adding new perspective, or reinforcing the previously advanced ones.

In what follows, a brief revisit of the main viewpoints is carried out, in order to sketchily depict the nuances in the portfolio of positions regarding the issue of *why & how* to accept anglicisms in Romanian. Our views, and their didactic consequences, will be therefore based on a deep exercise of processing the main views in the Romanian literature on the topic.

However, we should emphasize that, in our opinion, the reason for the penetration is not always the same; thus, if 'anglomania' was, at the beginning of the democratic era in the early 1990s, a form of compensation-seeking after the darkness of the closed socialist regime, with the emergence of new terminology in science and technology, such as the one in IT, the reasons for accepting anglicisms smoothly shift from an understandable, after all, thirst of novelty imported from the West, towards the specific need to fill in the blanks in the Romanian technical lexis specific to domains such as Computer Science. What really happened next is a not always well justified extension of the degree of acceptance towards other domains and other terms, such as fashion or journalism, now abounding in English terms taken over as such, or even worse, with meaning distortion.

There are authors (Kontek, 2013) whose studies are focused on providing and discussing possible definitions of the term *anglicism*, and on tracing the first such linguistic instances (back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), connecting and even explaining them against the historic, political, social and economic context of each period. Roughly speaking, the real threshold for change is represented by the post-communist period after 1990, which marks a really strong tendency of the new waves of borrowings of English entering the language. Lists of older borrowings are also provided in certain resources ([www.ezglot.com](http://www.ezglot.com), 2018), with examples such as: *gem* from *jam*, *giacă* from *jacket*, *lider* from *leader*, *tramvai* from *tramway*.

The markedness of the phenomenon was so powerful that quite soon one first comprehensive and much quoted work was published (Avram, 1997). Besides inventorying *causes* and *types* of anglicisms and their morphologic behaviour, the issue of *acceptance* is also raised, with a certain amount of permissivity in terms of recommendable attitude, but with a stress on the correctness of their adaptation, morphology wise.

We can find a subtle analysis of the potential causes of penetration of anglicisms in Romanian, mainly based on the theory of contacts between languages, but also between the two economies, cultures and even nations (Buzatu, 2007). The author maintains that 'English borrowings influence the linguistic strata' of Romanian, hypothesizing that a new potential linguistic entity might occur – 'RomEnglish'.

To further pursue this line of the investigation, the issue of *adaptation* from the morphologic viewpoint is also discussed (Smantana, 2008). Examples are provided of borrowings that remain unchanged in the host language – Romanian: *laptop*, *online*, *hair-style* and so on. The dynamics of acceptance from the linguistic point of view is described in its main stages. Thus, we can distinguish between (i) foreign words, for instance *show*, *leasing*, and (ii) those words that have been moulded alongside the forms specific to the host language (e.g. *miting* from *meeting*), sometimes with a change of meaning. It is to be noted that not all English words used by Romanian speakers, though, undergo the process of being fully adapted as a borrowing and comply with the host language linguistic paradigms.

In terms of causality of acceptance, there are two directions, as follows: (i) there are *necessary* borrowings, filling in a gap in the lexis of the host language, and (ii) there are the so-called (Sextil Puscariu, 1976) *luxury* ones, those trespassing morphological norms, being in general the result of some fashionable trend, at social and linguistic levels. As justly emphasized in the literature (Buzatu Hriban, 2011), necessary borrowings play a useful role of enriching Romanian and its possibilities of communicating meaning better.

A valuable point of view as far as *acceptance* causes are concerned (Chelaru-Murăruș, 2006) explains in detail the 'hunger of reality' manifest after 1989 in Romania, a country reconnecting fast to the world beyond the borders. Several specific aspects are worth mentioning:

- the waves of anglicisms fill in the big denomination gaps in most domains of human activity – examples: *airbag*, *audit*, *barter*, *brand*, *briefing*, *discount*, *hacker*, *mall*, *site*,
- simultaneously, old-fashioned *wooden language* terms are immediately replaced by attractive English neologisms – for instance, *slujbă* / *job*, *comitet* / *board*,
- moreover, certain word meanings are reshaped, with their old communist negative connotation being redirected (*compromise* / *compromise*, to negotiate / *a negocia*); exaggerated forced semantics versions distort the initial meaning (*a aplica* for *a face o cerere*).

There are sometimes situations (Sim, 2006) when native speakers do not even clearly perceive the transfer of certain English terms, particularly if they are included in advertising messages or in the industry of entertainment, with plenty of examples all around.

The *use vs abuse* dilemma analysis, as they emerge from various studies, reveals an array of positions among researchers. There are voices (Zafiu, 2006) warning about the potential negative effects of anglicisms entering popular media in an inappropriate manner, while some others (e.g. the radio program *Anglicisme, un show ce strică beauty-ul limbii române*, 2017), point to the

risks of 'colonization' of the host language, arguing that such borrowings are in fact useless and rather snobbish. Similar opinions (Muresan, 2015) literally point to the current 'invasion' of anglicisms in the language of journalism.

In recent years, the need to cover in a comprehensive work all the important aspects concerning anglicisms in the Romanian language was conducive to a rich valuable work (Șerban, 2012), that covers a multitude of aspects, such as: history of borrowings, comparative views with the situations in other countries, attitudes towards the phenomenon in various cultures/countries and, of course, in Romania as well, linguistic aspects, a discussion of necessity vs luxury, with exemplifications per domains. What is more, the conclusions cover significant ideas related to the implications and difficulties of the adaptation process, as well as the 'impact Anglicisms have and/or is expected to have on the Romanian language in the future'.

### **3. An awareness raising approach – some examples**

In a recent interview taken by A. Ofiteru (Zafiu, 2015), an important idea can be found, viz. that in Romania 'success in life still depends on the manner in which one speaks Romanian'. Indeed, we fully agree with the fact that it is one of the main duties of teachers, in all forms of education, to contribute to providing support to the young generations to reach a corresponding level of proficiency in the mother tongue.

In particular, this is equally valid for the context of the author of this study, namely engineering students in technical tertiary education. The main viewpoint emphasized here is that learners should be helped to correctly understand what attitude to take as to the question whether anglicisms should be used in Romanian, to what extent, by taking into consideration various types of contextual factors, such as domain specificity, in a well-informed educated manner. In what follows, the main components of the proposed approach are presented, together with the *rationale* underlying each one.

To begin with, students should be sensitized as to the various features of communication in domains such as science and technology, business, fashion, sports or social media. They should be challenged to make comparisons among them, as far as the presence of anglicisms is concerned, looking for the causes of occurrence in each specific field of activity, identifying examples, investigating on the issue of acceptance vs rejection by linguists and other professional categories, including those in their own field of activity.

The objective of such activities is to get the trainees to understand that aspects such as acceptance of anglicisms, level of frequency in use, causes for rejection a.s.o. are never identical for each and every domain of human activity. Moreover, they should see them positioned differently and dynamically on a *continuum*, which changes aspect from domain to domain.

Therefore, in order to contribute to the development of the future successful specialists, it is mandatory that a teacher should (i) design and use in class awareness raising activities aimed at shaping up the students' mentality, and (ii) guide the learners throughout the process of developing their abilities to detect whether a term from English is really necessary, or it is just one more instance of acting in a 'fashionable' manner. In their common activity, a key factor is, in our opinion, to attain such a goal smoothly, and not in a peremptory manner. Hence, the task types designed and used in class should be both challenging and rewarding.

In the proposed approach, an important role is played by the framework of well-justified pedagogical principles underlying the design and rationale of each task. The chain of activities integrates skills, trying to re-create quasi authentic contexts for the requirements. The dynamic of the activities starts from providing examples for the issue at hand, exploring and comparing them, identifying causes, expressing personal opinions and discussing them with those of peers in class, making clear-cut distinctions among the presence of anglicisms in various domains, finding out reasons for use and risks of abuse for each analyzed context etc.

Certainly, in function of the timing available and the importance attached to the matter, all or just some of the tasks can be used in each concrete case. In this study, only several samples are given, with the remark that each teacher can adapt these ideas to their own contexts.

At the *firststage*, that of searching for examples, the requirement is that students, working individually or - even better - in small groups, should find terms in a certain domain, examples of use, try to understand the reason why the English word is preferred to the Romanian one. The rationale is that of developing the learners' strategies of exploring, reflecting, identifying reasons and drawing conclusions, which they should be able to express in English, adding convincing arguments and examples.

As nothing can illustrate better the usefulness of such a task than some examples produced by the students in class, several excerpts of the second year bachelor level students' projects are briefly presented below.

Student M.V. organized examples based on the criterion of the existence or lack of equivalent in Romanian for some terms in IT:

- with equivalent in Romanian (remarking that sometimes the equivalent is not exactly the one to be found in DOOM – *sic!*): *motherboard* - *placa de baza*, *keyboard* – *tastatura*,
- no equivalent whatsoever in Romanian: *browser*, *cache*, *cookie* (remarking that this category, that has to do with the Internet, Internet access or part of the Internet, are used in English in a very high percent).

Student G.G. investigated the area of business, producing examples such as:

- terms with existing equivalent in Romanian: *auditors* – *auditori*, *bond* – *creanta/obligatie*, *equity* – *capital propriu*,
- terms used in the English form: *NASDAQ*, *overdraft* (although the term *neacoperire* does exist), abbreviations such as *CEO*.

A different approach was taken by student A.C., who listed:

- some terms that do not have an equivalent in Romanian, adding pertinent comments: e.g. *marketing*, as 'nobody uses another term for this...currently everybody uses even in Romanian the term *marketing*, there is *marketing* in absolutely any field, but particularly in IT, where products must be introduced on the market as *marketing* concepts' – same for *designer*, *site*, *blog*, *server*,
- terms with equivalent in Romanian, but which are preferentially used in the English version: *staff* – *personal*, *dealer* – *distribuitor*, *manager* – commenting: 'it depends on what sort of *manager* that is!'

Finally, as one of the IT students is also a fashion blogger, A.B. produced the following:

- no equivalent: *glamour*, *look*, *designer*,
- with possible equivalent, but still English preferred: *street style* (= *moda de strada*, comment: 'but I don't think anybody uses the Romanian equivalent'), *bodycon* (= *rochie mulata*), *shopping* (= *cumparaturi*), *trends* (= *tendinte*, comment: this one in Romanian, but mostly in the phrase: *in tendinte*), *catwalk* (= *podium*).

A *second* type of task gets the learners to decide what terms to choose for a given context, for instance in IT, for a type of audience, for instance for the lay person or, on the contrary, for specialists. Two versions are provided for the students to choose from, the purely English one and the Romanian equivalent. Terms are selected from all categories of the continuum, from those terms without equivalent (*firewall* vs *perete de foc*), through those with double possibilities (*keyboard* = *tastatura*), and up to those which can be comfortably replaced by the Romanian term, although there may be an already established jargon which accommodates the English terms, sometimes even partially adapted as to its meaning (*copy* = *a copia*). To increase the challenge level of the task, the order in which they are listed in the sentences provided is random.

Such a task positions the learners in a lifelike situation which already is familiar to them, as it is that of their domain of study, namely IT in the educational context presented here. The

discussions that follow also have an awareness raising role, as the students will provide instances of use they are familiar with.

A version of task two above will enlarge the scope of the debates, as the students are given a context that is not that of their studies, for instance they are asked to fill in the option they would make for a context such as social media and discussions about fashion or sports – such an activity will yield numerous comments and divergent opinions, all having the role to increase the trainees' awareness of the best attitude to adopt for a variety of contexts.

The *final stage* will be a free production one, with the learners being given the features of the context for which they are asked to create (individually, or better, in pairs/groups) a text type, such as a product presentation in IT for a range of potential clients, or a text on a blog of a fashionista addressed to the young generation, or a presentation for a tv show in a domain – there are multiple possibilities, that should reflect the students' interests and potential contexts of work, study or their hobbies and interests. They should use the adequate terminology for the given contextual elements. Colleagues are required to jot down on their observation sheets all the examples they hear and then discuss whether the choices were indeed specific to the required context or not. In class, this task generates hot debates on terms such as: a *serui* = *to share*, a *urca poze* = *to upload*.

#### 4. Open conclusions

The issue of anglicisms in Romanian has raised debates for some time now, especially due to a somehow understandable massive trend toward acceptance without many reservations of the English terms, even if in some cases the Romanian language does have a perfect equivalent.

The discussion here does not cover old borrowings from English, but mainly those occurring over the last two decades, with the emergence and development of science, technology, communication via social media and so on.

It is maintained that by designing a task-based approach that would raise such issues in the English language class, there are chances that the students may develop an awareness of the degree of acceptance that is appropriate from case to case.

It is the teacher's duty to sensitize the trainees in this respect, although the process will undoubtedly have certain *limitations*, such as the time available against the constraint of the syllabus or the fact that in some cases the stakeholders might not see the issue as important. However, even if such tasks are not extensively used in a certain educational situation, they may still have chances to determine the students to become more reflective in- and outside the instructional context.

Certainly, in order to collect statistically significant data which could show real trends, *questionnaires* should be designed and applied in various domains and contexts of use – and the teacher could bring the results of such investigations to the language class and have the trainees debate upon them and compare with their own opinions, thus personalizing the research and contribute to a higher degree of awareness of the matter.

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