

New Concepts and New Words – How Do Languages Cope With the Problem of Neology?

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ABSTRACT

It is a well-known fact that languages react differently when foreign words denoting new concepts have to be integrated into the native system. The procedure mostly depends on the degree of purism present in a linguistic community: some languages are rather open to foreign influences and do not demonstrate any special hostility towards new words which are easily accepted and adapted to the phonological and morphological systems of the receiving language. Languages, which have a strong puristic tradition, usually channel their borrowings into the loan translation field using internal word formation resources as a means of creating neologisms. Regardless of whether they are built of native elements or appear as loans, neologisms are necessarily the result of linguistic changes.

Key words: *neologism, puristic tradition, word formation, linguistic changes*

Introduction

The last decades of the 20th century have shown that a great deal of McLuhan's ideas had come true. Due to the increasing possibilities of high technologies, fast transportation, sophisticated means of communication – primarily the Internet – the world has become a *global village*. New ideas and new products are no longer the property of one single inventor or one single nation but spread extremely fast all over the globe.

Regardless of where it has come into being, each new idea, each new product is necessarily given a name; when transferred to other languages they naturally bring this name along. The reactions of the receiving languages are different: some languages are rather open to foreign influences and easily accept new words, which are given the status of loans. If they fit into the native phonological, morphological and word formation systems

they soon become an integral part of the vocabulary. Already in the 1980s the issue seemed to be of interest to some linguists so Galinsky found out that American neologisms needed from two days (the word *cogeneration*) to twenty-eight years (the word *motel*) to be transferred into German^{1*}. Today, we can assume that such transfers might sometimes take only a few minutes. While many languages see no problems in adopting new foreign words, others – the ones with a strong puristic tradition – try to translate most of the new foreign elements and thus channel all their borrowing into the loan translation field. The majority of languages, however, seems to be following a middle course trying to reach a compromise between the two extremes. As the influx of new words grows languages are compelled to act either way.

There is also another type of neologisms: new words are created out of native material meeting the actual needs of a community. In spite of the fact that such neologisms are very often badly accepted by the average speaker they are »an important desideratum for any autonomous standard language«². This type of new words is, of course, mostly locally restricted in usage although sometimes – in special cases, which will be mentioned later – they can be transferred to other languages as loans.

Types of Linguistic Changes

Neologisms are always the result of linguistic changes. These changes are usually divided into three types³:

- a) The s.c. natural grammatical changes,
- b) Semantic-lexical innovations which directly or indirectly reflect the increasing need of a society to name new concepts,

- c) Innovations which are primarily based on the direct correlation between society and language, or changes in which society plays the most active role.

Another division of lexical changes is the one into internal and external: the first ones are rather slow, mostly going on for decades and thus quite difficult to notice. The second ones are triggered by extralinguistic factors, mostly sociolinguistic and sociopolitical ones; they can be very sudden, thus rather conspicuous⁴.

Changes of political or social conditions in a country can very often be one of the major generators of neologisms. One can easily see how such changes influence the language and to what extent they bring about the creation of new words or the loss of others, which undergo the process of archaisation. For the purpose of this paper we have chosen two cases in which such a change significantly influenced the creation of new words or the loss of quite a number of old ones. The first one is the reunion of the two German states in 1990 and the second one is the foundation of Croatia as an independent state after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia in 1991. Although very different in their core both changes brought about similar effects.

In Germany there have been several projects dealing with the s.c. *Wendezeit* and the result are studies and articles, which tackle different aspects of language usage in the given period. Basically, three procedures have been noticed⁵:

- 1) The creation of neologisms,
- 2) Changes in meaning of some words and,
- 3) Historization of whole parts of the vocabulary, especially those connected with the former GDR political and ideological spheres.

* Although Galinsky investigated a rather restricted corpus the results he arrived at are still valuable.

The Croatian situation was similar in many respects and linguistic changes became a rather frequent topic of round tables, conferences and studies. The three types of changes noticed in the German case are valid for Croatia as well. Many new words appeared – some completely new, some old ones revitalized. Others got new meanings, while quite a number were pushed into the passive vocabulary because they belonged to the official language of the former state and were felt as either not appropriate or totally useless because of the new social, political and economic setting (as e.g. *samoupravljanje* 'self management' or *udruženi rad* 'joint work'.)*

German was enriched by words like: *Ausreisedruck*, *Mauerspecht*, *Wirtschafts-*, *Währungs-* and *Sozialunion*, *Allianz für Deutschland*, *Zwei-Plus-Vier-Gespräche* etc.; by new meanings like: *Akte* 'personenbezogene Stasi-Akte' e.g.; On the other hand it lost many of the GDR-specific vocabulary: *Blockpolitik*, *Kombinat*, *Konfliktkommission*, *polytechnische Erziehung*, *Valutamarkt*, *Aspirantur*, *Gestattungsproduktion*, *Volksmarine*, *gesellschaftliche Gerichte* etc.⁵

In Croatian – unlike in Serbian – puristic tendencies have been present in different historical epochs with more or less force. With the foundation of the Republic of Croatia, these tendencies became rather strong, especially during the first years. Quite a number of Croatian words that had been pushed into the passive vocabulary at the time when Serbo-Croatian was the official language were revitalized and brought to everyday usage replacing the internationalisms that were used before:

dužnosnik (funkcionar), *gospodarstvo* (ekonomija), *oporba* (opozicija), *ozračje* (atmosfera), *promidžba* (propaganda), *prosvjed* (protest), *povjerenstvo* (komisija), *putovnica* (pasoš 'passport') *veleposlanstvo* (ambasada), *vjerodajnica* (akreditiv) etc.

Many Serbian words were felt as intruders into Croatian and thus expelled from the (active) vocabulary and a number of s.c. differential dictionaries of Croatian and Serbian were published at that time. Such puristic trends also brought about the creation of new words – sometimes quite successful ones as e.g. *uspješnica* < *uspjeh* 'success' instead of the Anglicism *hit*, *perilica* < *prati* 'to wash' instead of the Germanism *vešmašina* 'washing machine', *izbornik* < *izabrati* 'to select, chose' instead of *selektor*, *pričao-nica* < *pričati* 'to talk' for *chatroom*, etc.

Methods Applied in the Creation of Neologisms

A rather frequent method in the creation of neologisms is the use of native prefixes and suffixes or nominal or adjectival parts of compounds, which, at a certain point, can become extremely productive in the word formation system of a language. All languages show evidence of such procedures, we shall give just some examples. In American English during the 1970s and 80s frequent use had been made of *-gate* and *-holic*:

Irangate, *Koreagate*, *Quakergate*, *Oilgate*, *Cattlegate*, *Hollywoodgate* etc.**
workaholic, *colaholic*, *mariholic*, *shop-*

* For more examples see Kunzmann-Müller.⁶

** At that time *-gate* appeared in a number of Croatian hybrid compounds denoting a scandal: e.g. *agrogate*, *Fadiljgate* etc.⁷; oddly enough we came across a fresh example: *saborgate* < *sabor* 'Croatian parliament' (Vjesnik, September 27, 2003)

*paholic, chocoholic, computerholic, etc.**

In the 1980s German had numerous compounds with *Null-* and *-Loch*:

*Null-Lösung, Nulloption, Nullvariante, Nullpreis, Nullregelung, Nullzinsen; Haushaltsloch, Sommerloch, Oktoberloch, Milliardenloch, etc.*⁸

In languages like Croatian where compounding is less frequent suffixes are very often used to build new words: thus the suffix *-ijada* has been very frequent in the formation of neologisms:

biciklijada (< *bicikl*) 'an organized mass bicycle tour', *cigičijada* (< *Cigić*) 'a traditional meeting of families bearing the name Cigić', *Črnkasijada*^{**} (< coll. *Črnkas* < *Črnomerec*) 'a locally organized meeting of a community in Zagreb', *kestenijada* (< *kesten* 'chestnut') 'chestnuts festivity', *kulenijada* (< *kulen* 'a kind of salami') 'contest for the best *kulen*', *norijada* (< Kajkavian dial. *noriti* 'be foolish') 'the festivity of the graduates in Zagreb', *salamijada* (< *salama*) 'contest for the best salami', *romobilijada* (< *romobil* 'scooter') 'contest for the best scooter driver' etc.

Another suffix is *-ica* which has given quite a number of neologisms like:

dopusnica (< *dopustiti* 'allow') 'the acceptance of a (university) program' *odbijenica* (< *odbiti* 'reject') 'the rejection of a program, request', *perilica* (< *prati* 'to wash') 'washing machine', *potvrđnica* (< *potvrditi* 'to attest') 'an attestation for the participation in a course, congress', *pržilica* (< *pržiti* 'to burn') 'burner', *stopalnica* (< *stopalo* 'foot') 'a

very short stocking covering just the foot', *suđerica* (< *sude* 'dishes') 'dish-washer', *završnica* (< *završiti* 'to finish') 'the finals', etc.

Anglicisms

It is a well-known fact that Anglicisms have been entering European languages with more intensity since the end of World War II. The impact of English has proven to be strong for half a century now and as a matter of fact its influence has even grown. There is no need to talk about English being a *lingua franca* in international communication: the results of it can be seen very clearly. Dictionaries of foreign words and dictionaries of neologisms in many European languages contain an extremely high percentage of words of English origin; there are also quite a number of specialized dictionaries of Anglicisms in several languages. A dictionary which provides a comparative view of sixteen languages is *The Dictionary of European Anglicisms* and it undoubtedly reflects the present day situation¹⁰. The few illustrations quoted (and we have to point out that just simple, everyday words have been chosen) will provide enough evidence (Figure 1).

We have to say, however, that since 2001 when the dictionary was published the number of Anglicisms (in Croatian as well as in other languages) has extremely increased and we are witnessing a constant influx on an almost daily basis.

Exotisms

While Anglicisms have been discussed from all possible aspects^{***}, a special sec-

* More examples can be found in the *Third Barnhart Dictionary of New English*⁹.

** Some of these neologisms might disappear after some time as they were coined for special occasions; most of them, however, have been accepted, at least in colloquial usage.

*** The list of articles and authors dealing with Anglicisms in various languages is far too long to be quoted here.

shop *n.*, *cp*^{1/2} 1 'a place for selling and buying goods', +1a 'a candy store; a kiosk', 5 'an institution, establishment, place of business, etc.'

Two things are especially remarkable about the distribution of *shop*: (a) it illustrates the dominance of British English, *store* being very rare; and (b) the peculiar restriction to the second position in compounds: while it is near-universal in German combinations, it hardly ever occurs by itself (cf. Dutch, French, Italian, Hungarian, Greek: a pan-European phenomenon).

Ge [=E] *cp*², M, pl. -s, beg19c (1 arch); *cp*², 1960s, 1(1 mod) < *Laden* Du [ʃɔpə(n)] C, *cp*², 1970s, 1(1 tech) → *shoppen* v. Nw *sjapp(e)* [ʃap(e)] M, pl. -er, end19c, 1(3); *shop* [=E] *cp*¹, M, pl. -(p)er, 1930s, 1(2) → *shoppe* v. Ic *sjoppa* [sjɔhpa] F, pl. -ur, 1930s, +1a(2 coll) 5(2 sla, pej) → *sjoppulegur* adj. Fr <=>E *cp*², 20c, 1(1 mod) Sp <=>E *cp*², 1(1 mod) It [ʃɔp] *cp*², M, pl. Ø, 1960s, 1(2) Rm [=E] N, 1970s, 1(2 mod) Rs *shop* M, pl. -y, 1990s, 1(1 mod) Po <=>E M, beg20c, 1(2) Cr *šop* M, pl. -ovi, end20c, 1(1) Bg <=>E *cp*^{1/2}, M, pl. -al-ove, 1990s, 1(1 mod) Fi *shoppi* *soppi* 19c, 1(1) Hu [=E] *cp*², pl. Ø >-ok, beg20c, 1(2) Gr <=>E [=E] *cp*², N, end20c, 1(2 mod)

Ic	Nw	Po	Rs
Du	Ge	Cr	Bg
Fr	It	Fi	Hu
Sp	Rm	Al	Gr

toaster *n.* 'an electrical device for making toast'

The electric appliance was invented in the USA in 1913, and the word apparently spread with the item, but became widely used on (parts of) the Continent only from the 1950s.

Ge [tɔ:sta] M, pl. Ø, 1960s (2) Du [=E] C, 1990s (1 jour, you) < *broodrooster* Nw (o) < *brodrister* Fr *toaster/toasteur* 1960s (1) < *grille-pain* Sp - < *tostadora* It - < *tostapane* Rm (o) = *prājitor de pâine* Rs *toster* M, pl. -y, end20c (1 tech, mod) Po *toster* [toster] M, end20c (1 tech) < *opiekacz* Cr *toster* M, pl. -i, end20c (1 tech) Bg *toster* M, pl. -al-i, mid20c (2) Gr *tostiera* F, mid20c (3)

Ic	Nw	Po	Rs
Du	Ge	Cr	Bg
Fr	It	Fi	Hu
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e-mail/electronic mail *n.* 1 'messages distributed by electronic means, esp. from one computer system to one or more recipients', 2 'the electronic mail system'

This recent loan does not permit safe conclusions about how it will be treated; however, it is noteworthy that mainly Germanic languages have adopted the loanword whereas others have preferred to calque.

Ge [j:me:ɪ] F [U] 1980s (1 tech) → *e-mailen* v. Du [=E] C, 1980s (1 tech) Nw [=E] M, pl. -er/[U] 1980s (1 tech) > trsl *e-post* → *maile* v. Ic [i:meil] N/[i:meil] M [U] 1990s (1 tech, coll) < rend *tölvupóstur* Fr <=>E M, 1980s (1 tech/ban) > rend *messagerie (électronique)* < *courrier électronique* Sp [imjil] M [U] 1990s (1 tech, rare) < trsl *correo electrónico* It [=E] F [U] 1990s (1 tech) < trsl *posta elettronica* Rm *e-mail* [=E] N [U] 1990s (1 tech) > rend *poštá electronicá* Rs *i-meil* M, uninfl., 1990s (1 tech) < trsl *elektronnaya pochta* Po <=>E F, 1990s (1 tech) < trsl *poczta elektroniczna* Cr [imej] F [U] 1990s (1 tech) < trsl *elektronnska pošta* Bg *imejil* M [U] 1990s (1 tech) < trsl *elektronna pošta* Fi *meilmaili* [meil] (1 tech); - < 2: *sähköposti* → *mailata* v. Hu [=E] [U] 1980s (1>2 tech) → -ez v. Gr <=>E [imejil] N, pl. Ø/-s, 1990s (2)

grapefruit *n.* 1 'a large round yellow citrus fruit'

This word is more widespread in Eastern Europe – apparently because the fruit was already known in the West by its Dutch-mediated term *pompelmoes*.

Ge [gr:pfɾu:t] F [U] 20c (1 mod) < *Pampelmuse* Du [gr:pfɾu:t] C, 1950s (2) < *pompelmoes* Nw *grapefruit/grape* [=E+Nw/gr:ɛ:p] 20c (2+5) Ic [krei:pfɾuht/-fru:t] mid20c (o arch); *grapelgreip* [krei:p] N, pl. Ø 1970s (3) > creat *greipävöxtur, greipaldin* Fr <=>E *grape-fruit* [grɛpfrut] M, beg20c (1 reg) < *pamplemousse, pomélo* It - < *pompelmo* Rm <=>E/*grepfrut/grep/gref* [grɛpfrut/grep/gref] N, mid20c (2>3) Rs *grejpfɾut* M [U] mid20c (3) Po *grejpfɾut* <=>E M, beg20c (2) → *grapefrucik* M; -owy adj. Cr *grejpfɾut* M [U] 20c (2) Bg *grejfrut, grejfrut, grejfrukt* M, pl. -al-i, mid20c (2,3) > *grejpfɾut* Fi *greippi* 20c (3) Hu [=E/gr:ɛpfɾu:/gr:ɛpfɾy] pl. Ø, 1930-60s (2) → adj., *cp*¹ Al *grejpfɾutē* [grɛjpfɾutē] F, pl. Ø 20c (1 coll) Gr *grejpfɾut* N, beg20c (2)

Ic	Nw	Po	Rs
Du	Ge	Cr	Bg
Fr	It	Fi	Hu
Sp	Rm	Al	Gr

Fig. 1. Some examples of Anglicisms in European languages¹⁰.

tion of the vocabulary in every language which is represented by words that originate in the s.c. exotic languages has not been written about very frequently. What *exotic* means in this context is, of course, very relative – from the point of view of the recipient (in our case European) language it would mean notions originating

in non-European countries and languages. These words are most certainly not easy to translate because not many people know the languages they come from. This is why – in the majority of cases – they remain at the level of loans and almost never reach the status of loan translations. Thus, when it comes to words of

Japanese, Chinese, Korean etc. origin all European languages act more or less the same way: they simply form a loan built according to the foreign model. Of course, such a procedure makes most of the European languages very similar in the lexis of some specific fields of interest, especially if one has in mind that most such words come via an intermediary language – very often English. The last decades have shown a high degree of fascination by the far eastern ways of living so quite a portion of terms denoting several therapeutic procedures, house decoration, natural remedies, sports, relaxation techniques, dog breeds – to mention just some of the most popular ones – have become part of our lives here in Europe as well: *shiatsu, reiki, wok, tae bo, tai chi, tekvondo, nanbudo, tofu, šarpei, seitan, shitzu, feng shui, karate**, and many more.

To prove our hypothesis that the majority of languages use the same procedures, i.e. stay within the field of direct loans, we can use two methods. One is to collect a corpus of – in our case – Croatian neologisms from daily press, weekly magazines, specialized journals and TV and then check the detected words in other languages (either in dictionaries or in available corpora).

The other is to collect what is usually called *comparable corpora*; according to Sinclair it is »a corpus which consists of similar texts in more than one language or variety«¹¹. What makes such corpora better than the s.c. *parallel corpora* is the fact that one can compare several languages in similar communication conditions. They also seem to be a suitable source of new words, occurring in different languages. We thus gathered a corpus consisting of several editions of one and

the same journal (French, Italian, English, Croatian and German editions of *Elle*)^{**}. In this way we were provided by texts with similar subjects in five languages that can be easily compared. The loans found in this – rather restricted corpus – once again proved our hypothesis that at a certain level languages come very close in their respective vocabularies^{***}:

- Cr. *top, refleksologija, basic, shiatsu, aromaterapija, thai-masaža, tui-na masaža, wellness-centar, fitness, pareo, piercing*
- Engl. *must-have accessory, mules, tank top, bomber, top, futon, tan-aholic, piercing*
- Fr. *reflexologie, soin thai, oversize, mules, loft, shiatsu, pareo, tongs, (les) must-have, top*
- Germ. *Wellness-Trend, Ayurveda-Treatment, Fitnessdrink, Eyecatcher, Tofu, Highlighter, die Musthaves, Tanktop, Cargopants, Flip-Flops, die Basics, Pareo*
- Ital. *beach party, cargo pants, micro T-shirt, bomber, pantajogging, un must, tofu, piercing, top, rifllessologia, pezzi basic, fitoterapia, loft*

Neologisms as a Consequence of Special Sociopolitical Conditions on a Global Level

We have discussed the generation of new words in the context of major sociopolitical changes in a society, which are locally restricted and mostly do not spread outside the borders of a given state. Nevertheless, a number of such neologisms have – because of their general importance – soon become parts of an inter-

* The words are quoted as they appear in Croatian.

** Issues for June and July 2003.

*** The examples were chosen at random out of a much bigger number collected in all the analyzed languages.

national vocabulary and have been used as loans in many languages: Russ. *glasnost* and *perestrojka* e.g., Pol. *solidarnosc* etc. There are also other events – especially those on a global level – which very often can bring about the influx of new words in a much more intensive way than one would expect. Thus different sports events, political summits, wars, cultural events, space flights, etc. (to mention just some) cause languages to import numerous new words in a very short time. Newspapers sometimes feel compelled to publish small glossaries of new words that have been used in such special occasions in order to make them understandable to the average reader. The most recent example would certainly be the war in Iraq that initiated several neologisms and made journalists compile word lists, like the one in a Croatian daily paper, (*Jutarnji list*, March 27, 2003). It contained terms like *embedding*, *target of opportunity*, *slices*, *A-day*, *Shock & Awe*, *clever bombs*, *MOAB*, *MOPP*, etc. Some of them were translated and might stay in the language as loan translations (like e.g. *kriške* < *slices*, *meta prilike* < *target of opportunity*, *dan-A* < *A-day*; *šok i strahopoštovanje* < *Shock & Awe*, *pametne bombe* < *clever bombs*) while others were just given definitions. Such glossaries are also quite common in women's magazines, especially in the fashion section, their purpose being to inform the reader of neologisms appearing as a consequence of new trends in the mentioned field*.

Conclusion

If we were to sum up the most significant points concerning neologisms we could say that a general trend seems to be a kind of convergence of languages (at least the European ones). It is a fact that quite a portion of the new vocabulary is shared by a number of genetically close but also rather distant languages. There have always been internationalisms that were part of the borrowed lexis in all languages – in the European context they are sometimes called Europeanisms; today, however, it is mostly Anglicisms. On the other hand, puristically oriented languages that tend to translate as many loans as possible might to a certain extent differ in that respect but there is always a long way from suggesting a new word built out of native elements to its acceptance and full integration into the system. This is why in spite of all the efforts in some languages, like French e.g., the reality is still similar to linguistic situations in countries which are less concerned about the future of their mother tongues. It is also not quite clear why certain loans are easily and quickly translated and why others never reach the status of loan translation. Why e.g. French has *les vaches folles*, Croatian *lude krave*, German *Rinderwahnsinn* etc. while the same languages have not even tried to translate *snowboard* e.g. (which they could have like some others). But this is another topic, which exceeds the aims set for this paper.

* It was the computer terminology a few years ago.

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NOVI POJMOVI I NOVE RIJEČI – KAKO JEZICI RJEŠAVAJU PROBLEM NEOLOGIJE?

SAŽETAK

Dobro je poznata činjenica da jezici različito reagiraju u situaciji kad strane riječi koje označuju nove pojmove treba integrirati u domaći sustav. Proces najčešće ovisi o stupnju purizma prisutnoga u nekoj jezičnoj zajednici: pojedini su jezici veoma otvoreni stranim utjecajima i ne pokazuju posebno neprijateljstvo prema novim riječima koje se lako prihvaćaju i prilagođuju fonološkom i morfološkom sustavu jezika prima-telja. Jezici koji imaju jaku purističku tradiciju obično usmjeravaju svoje posuđivanje na područje prevedenica, rabeći unutarne mogućnosti tvorbe riječi kao sredstvo za stvaranje neologizama. Bez obzira jesu li građeni od domaćih sastavnica ili se javljaju kao posuđenice, neologizmi su nužno posljedica jezičnih promjena.