

Two Phenomena in English Loanword Adaptation in Swedish

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Anglicisms in Swedish share many common characteristics of anglicisms, and loanwords in general, in other European languages. However, in their adaptation one can note some interesting and peculiar phenomena that are either missing or are much less prominent in other languages. Two of them are discussed here:

– a pronounced orthographic trend, namely preservation of the English spelling within the Swedish system. Two thirds of the anglicisms in my 1461-item corpus are spelled in the same way as their English models;

– plural suffix *-s*, repeatedly borrowed into Swedish. Several factors promote its usage so that it appears as the only possibility or as one of the alternatives in the plural of more than 15% of substantives in my corpus, i.e. more commonly than some »proper« Swedish suffixes.

0. Introduction

Swedish is one of the six languages that have been closely studied within the EEEL project¹. A large corpus of anglicisms in Swedish – just as in all the other languages – has been compiled to provide the material for a study of loan word adaptation and to be quoted in a dictionary of anglicisms. The original corpus consisted of more than 2,000 anglicisms, i.e. loans which both in form and content have been

¹ *The English Element in European Languages*, a project directed by prof. Filipović and involving a number of associates from Croatia and abroad. Large corpora of anglicisms in six different languages have been compiled while reports have been written on the adaptation of anglicisms in an even larger number of languages.

More about the Project see in R. Filipović's contribution in this volume.

borrowed from English. In an attempt to limit the study to what could be considered truly well-established loans², the corpus was reduced to 1,461 items.

Five aspects of all the anglicisms in the corpus have been analysed: their orthography, phonological composition, morphological composition, characteristic morphological categories and their meaning. The analysis has basically followed the theoretical framework of R. Filipović's theory of languages in contact as it is described in a number of his articles and in two books, viz. Filipović 1986 and 1990.

The analysis and the conclusions drawn from it have already been reported upon, most completely in Antunović 1992.

The fact that the EEEL project has involved a fairly large number of languages has enabled comparison, particularly for those of us who worked on the dictionary of anglicisms in Croatian (Filipović 1990) and are now involved with another corpus. The comparison between adaptation processes in various languages is, however, still unsystematic, based on each researcher's experience and intuition, sometimes backed by the shared conviction of other collaborators.

Relying on my own experience with the Croatian and the Swedish corpus, as well as on the glimpses of other associates' work with their corpora, I have tried to single out for this occasion some phenomena that are specific to Swedish. Most characteristics of the adaptation of anglicisms to the Swedish system are shared by anglicisms – and loan words in general – in other languages as well. In all the languages studied within our project the process can be described in terms of the phenomena defined by Filipović. Differences are mainly seen in the relevance of each phenomenon and in the frequency with which it occurs in a particular language.

I have been using the term *adaptation* so far because it best describes the typical development from a foreign word to a well-established lexical item in a new system. Borrowed words most often undergo a number of changes in appearance and behavior, which brings them closer to what is natural for speakers of the borrowing language. Fully adapted loan words, especially after they have lived within a new system for several decades, conceal their foreign origin so well that many speakers are not aware of it at all.

There are, however, examples of the opposite as well. Quite unusually, some Swedish anglicisms have reversed their adaptation, changing from the »Swedimized« form they developed at an earlier stage back to a more English one.

² Only those words have been kept that are included in *Svensk ordbok*, 60,000-entry monolingual Swedish dictionary of general language published in 1986.

B. Molde, for example, observed in 1983 that »for several decades now, in numerous cases, old English loans have been obtaining a more English pronunciation instead of the one used before« (Molde 1983:50). He quoted the example of the anglicism *baby*, earlier pronounced as /'bɛbi/ or /'bebi/, which then began to be pronounced with a diphthong /'beɪbi/, despite the fact that the Swedish phonetic system includes no diphthongs.

M. Ljung (1985:75) mentions anglicisms *drive* and *juice* whose closer-to-the-original spelling has become the dominant and the more prestigious one, generally preferred to the earlier, »more Swedish« forms *dravj* and *jös*.

1. Main orthographic trend

An important characteristic of anglicisms in Swedish, not necessarily shared by anglicisms in other languages or even by Swedish loanwords borrowed from languages other than English, is their conspicuousness, which is primarily due to their spelling. Swedes do not seem to feel any pressing need to »domesticate« the written form of their anglicisms: *curling*, *gentleman*, *overhead*, *pacemaker*, *trenchcoat* and numerous other anglicisms have no alternative spellings.

G. Bergman (1984:210) mentions the fact that Swedish children already start learning their first foreign language, i.e. English, in the fourth grade. He feels that to be the reason why »adaptation of loanwords to Swedish orthography is not as strongly motivated as before«.

Undoubtedly important as that is, there are obviously other factors that contribute to the extended life of English spellings within the Swedish system (a comparison with Croatian circumstances seems quite appropriate here). Some of the relevant factors are the generally high level of the knowledge of English in Sweden, the prevailing tendency towards an internationalized (globalized) life style accompanied with an awareness of the role of English in international life, the long tradition of borrowing from English, etc.

Analysis of my corpus has fully confirmed this readiness of Swedish to take over and keep the English written form: out of the 1,461 anglicisms, more than 1,000 are spelled in the same way as their English models. Among them, 65 have an alternative spelling as well (*cricket* and *krieket*, *disco* and *disko*, *wigwam* and *vigvam*, *thinner* and *tinner*, *quilt* and *kvilta*, *masonite* and *masonit*, *spin* and *spinn*, *bob* and *bobb*, *essay* and *essä*, *flirt* and *flörta* etc.). The criteria for the composition of my corpus may, of course, have somewhat influenced the figures obtained but the margin is so large

that there can be no doubt about the dominant trend in the establishment of the written form of anglicisms in Swedish. In addition, there are almost one hundred items in the corpus whose spelling could have been determined either by the spelling or by the pronunciation of the model (e.g. *bit, denim, dress, film, grilla, mink, pudding, sampling* etc.) and they have not been counted as examples of equivalent spelling of a model and its replica.

This tendency to keep the English spelling is feasible because of the fact that the Swedish graphemic system includes all the English graphemes except *w* plus three additional ones (å, ä, ö). The graphemes are, however, combined in different ways so that in many cases it is obvious that foreign spelling has been imported. Illustrative examples are

– words that contain a sequence of two vowels, since that does not happen in »true« Swedish words (as in *bodybuilding, fair play, pool, reggae, scouting* etc.);

– words in which the letter *z* is used. In Swedish it is used only very sparsely, mostly in words of foreign origin. In anglicisms it appears in all positions: *zoom, zooma in, bazooka, blazer, muzak, jazz...*

– words in which the *c* of the model has not been replaced by *k*³ (*campus, cent, cocker spaniel, crosschecking; charleston, charter, chips, choka; hickory, high-tech, kick-off, pickles* etc.).

– anglicisms (only two in my corpus) containing apostrophies to indicate genitive (*no man's land*) or omission (*rock'n'roll*).

Since many of the models of the anglicisms quoted here have been borrowed into Croatian as well but with a changed (»Croatized«) written form, it is quite easy to gain an impression of the general uncommonness of the trend discussed here.

The only difference that has been neglected in establishing the equality of the spelling of a model and its replica (i.e. anglicism) refers to compounds and their spelling as one or two words, with or without a hyphen (e.g. Eng *old-timer* vs. Sw *oldtimer*, Eng *boarding card* vs. Sw *boardingcard*). It has seemed acceptable to ignore such differences mostly because, on the one hand, many of the English models have alternative spellings (e.g. *globe-trotter* and *globetrotter, high tech* and *high-tech*) and, on the other hand, Swedes are also often in doubt whether to apply the Swedish compound-written-as-one-word principle (as in *boardingcard, globetrotter, taxfree*), to keep the hyphen (as in *body-builder, eye-liner, go-cart, king-size, up-to-date*) or to keep separate writing (as has been done in Sw *best man, fair play, joint venture, pep talk, sudden death* etc).

³ The *c > k* replacement is one of the most commonly quoted changes in descriptions of orthographic adaptation of anglicisms in Swedish (e.g. in Bergman 1970:58, Chrystal 1988:94). However, my corpus has shown that there are quite a few words in which the change does not occur.

A particularly interesting group of loan compounds is the one exhibiting a form of hypercorrection: anglicisms whose English models are spelt as one word get a hyphenated or a two-word spelling, i.e. contrary to what would be normal in Swedish and different from the spelling of the English models (e.g. Sw *pop corn*, *shuffle-board*, *blow out*, *walk over* < Eng *popcorn*, *shuffleboard*, *blowout*, *walkover*).

2. Plural suffix -s

Another interesting phenomenon related to anglicisms in Swedish, this time on the morphological level, is the plural suffix *-s*. Its usage within the Swedish system is often seen as yet another instance of English-American influence, which is interesting enough since borrowing of grammatical morphemes does not occur very often. But there is much more to it, as has been noticed by many and explained in detail by B. Söderberg in her 1983 study:

– first of all, the suffix is not a loan from English only, but it has been repeatedly introduced into Swedish over five centuries from six different languages (from Low German in the sixteenth century; from Dutch and High German in the seventeenth century, during the latter part of which French, Spanish and English also appear as source languages; French is the dominant source in the eighteenth century, replaced by English in the 1800's and 1900's);

– secondly, the suffix is not rare, as are other loan plural suffixes in Swedish (e.g. *-a*, *-ta* borrowed from Latin and Greek). It is both frequent and productive, appearing in neologisms such as *golders*, *teeners*, *puffs*, and in »exotic words« such as *avokados*, *chaikas*, *parias*, *safaris*, *tatras*, *ustads*, *watutsis* etc. (Söderberg 1983:68, cf. also Liljestrand 1975:69) '... the combined influence from different languages has, in many cases, caused the *s* plural to be regarded as the appropriate ending for foreign words in general or words where the declension is unknown', says B. Söderberg (1983:166) and mentions 'modern forms like *silo-s*, *streber-s* and *tjuvstryker-s*';

– thirdly, it is a common topic of linguistic discussions, unavoidable in prescriptive linguistics (to ignore it or to include it in dictionaries, grammars and textbooks? to recommend it or ban it?)⁴, interesting and intriguing for descriptive linguistics (how

⁴ According to B. Söderberg, »the *s* plural is first accepted in dictionaries of foreign words from 1845 onwards, and after 1850 it is also accepted as a regular plural variant in many dictionaries of the Swedish language.« As for more recent dictionaries, »the Swedish Academy's shorter dictionary (SAOL) 1973 makes a firm stand in favour of an adaptation of *s* words by giving them Swedish plural endings, while Bonnier's Swedish dictionary (BSO) 1980 makes such a stand in favour of the *s* plural that this has been interpreted as a spineless concession to the existing (mis)use (...)

firmly established is it? do Swedes like it? do they use it? when? why? what does it communicate? what factors promote its borrowing?...).

My corpus convincingly shows the relevance of the plural *-s* for the study of Swedish anglicisms: it appears in the plural of more than 15% of all the substantives that have a plural form, i.e. more often than some of the five »proper« Swedish suffixes. With some nouns *-s* is the only possibility, e.g.

(*backhand, caddie, commando, evergreen, golddigger, hacker, martini, oldtimer, pipeline, story, sweatshirt*),

while with others it presents just one of two or more alternatives:

-s / -ar, (final *-er* + *-ar* resulting in *-rar*),

in *blinker, bulldozer, container, forward, gangster, go-cart, playboy, sandwich, tank, thriller* etc.

-s / -ϕ in *bikini, bookmaker, cardigan, designer, dumper, entertainer, eye-liner, fighter, gag, gallon, gospel, partner, scone, sprinkler, voucher, western* etc.

-s / -(e)r in *bungalow, cockpit, collie, come-back, cowboy, disc-jockey, groupie, hippie, yankee* etc.

-s/-ar/-ϕ in *best-seller, mixer, racer, roller, shaker, tanker*,

-s/-ar/-er in *budget* etc.

The high figures obtained in my research, taken together with reports on the suffix's productivity (even if mainly with words of foreign origin) and on the positive attitude of native speakers towards the *-s* plural (cf. Ljung 1985:179–181), suggest not only that the suffix must not be neglected but also that it might be justified to speak about a new declension in Swedish. B. Söderberg further explains: »For, it is possible with a comparatively high degree of truth, to predict under what conditions a new native *s* form can come into use.« And then she goes on to specify the conditions. (Söderberg 1983:169)

Opponents of the *-s* plural have quoted a number of arguments against it. It has been said that the suffix may cause confusion because it is homonymous with the genitive *-s*; that it doesn't combine well with the definite article *-na* (e.g. *hackersna*); that it is sometimes misinterpreted as a part of the stem (*keps, kalops, mods, muffins, parkas, tips...* are singular forms in Swedish), so that another plural ending gets attached to it, resulting in words such as *bäbis-ar, keps-ar, räls-ar* (cf. Croatian *keks-i* (<*cakes*), *drops-i, buc-e* (<*boots*)). Justified as these observations may seem, Swedes are obviously willing to face the difficulties.

On the other hand, my analysis may have overestimated the role of the plural *-s* because I have relied on the information provided by dictionaries, and dictionaries, together with advertising language, are called by B. Söderberg a »stronghold of the *s* plural«. The same author also points out »that the *s* plural has also a strong position in professional/technical language' and that it 'is used far more in written than in spoken language.« (Söderberg 1983:167). Still, it is obvious that on the whole she has no doubts about the importance of the plural *-s* in Swedish.

Barbro Söderberg offers some interesting remarks on reasons why people choose to use the *s* plural. She mentions

– a social factor, i.e. the social norm which »emphasizes that the use of a foreign ending is correct«. The *-s* form is thus endowed with a social value, since it demonstrates 'the sender's mastering both of a foreign language and of a social norm. And that social prestige seems to be one of the most influential factors in the modern Swedish use of the *s* plural' (1983:168);

– formal factors which promote the use of the *s* plural. Her findings confirm, in a more precise manner, G. Tingbjörn's »escapism thesis«, i.e. that by preserving the giving language's plural suffix one can postpone the decision regarding the gender, and thereby the native (Swedish in this case) plural suffix, of a borrowed word.

– semantic factors that encourage *s* plural in Swedish, most relevant among which are an emotional attitude to the referent, allusions to unfamiliar referents, and above all »reference to pairs (*slippers*), collective amounts (*cornflakes*) and groups (*mayas*). Here the *s* plural is dominant and words of these types show fewer adapted forms than those referring to individuals« (1983:168–169);

– functional (communicative, pragmatic) factors. »In certain informative texts the *s* forms seem, because of their prestige, to be used in order to suggest expert knowledge and reliability. In advertising language *s* forms are often chosen as a kind of sales argument, suggesting that the article for sale is new or foreign and in literary texts for example *s* forms are often used to create local and period colour.« (1983:170).

In my opinion all these observations are well founded, demonstrating how an imported morpheme can enrich a language. By developing a number of new functions and secondary meanings (elements of meanings, connotations...) it widens the borrowing language's repertoire and thus enables a more precise, more suggestive and sophisticated language usage.

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NEKE ZANIMLJIVOSTI U ADAPTACIJI ANGLICIZAMA U ŠVEDSKOM

Anglicizmi u švedskom dijele mnoge osobine anglicizama, i općenito posuđenica, u drugim jezicima. Ipak, proučavajući njihovu adaptaciju u švedskom sustavu uočavamo neke zanimljive pojave, kojih nema ili su prisutne u značajno manjoj mjeri u adaptaciji anglicizama u drugim evropskim jezicima. O dvije se takve pojave govori u ovom radu:

- o izrazitom trendu čuvanja engleskog pisanog oblika i unutar švedskog sustava, tako da dvije trećine anglicizama u proučavanom korpusu (1461 anglicizam) ima istu grafiju kao i njihovi engleski modeli;
- o upotrebi sufiksa -s u tvorbi množine imeničkih anglicizama.

Pojavi ovog sufiksa pogoduje niz okolnosti pa je tako zabilježen kao jedina mogućnost ili kao alternativa pri tvorbi množine više od 15% imenica u korpusu, dakle češće nego li neki »pravi« švedski sufiksi.