

Rudolf Filipović

## Semantic Extension Changes in Adaptation of English Loan-Words in Serbo-Croatian

1.0. In the course of my research into the linguistic procedure of the process of linguistic borrowing applied to English Loan-Words in Serbo-Croatian, I dealt mostly with questions ranging from the phonological to the morphological level.<sup>1</sup> In my attempt to give a theoretical survey of the principles of linguistic borrowing in addition to the phonological<sup>2</sup> and morphological<sup>3</sup> aspects I also covered the semantic<sup>4</sup> aspect. Then I was more interested in the theoretical approach to "Semantic Borrowing" which is one of the main problems dealt with by the majority of linguists interested in the semantic aspect of linguistic borrowing. There I met with some terminological difficulties<sup>5</sup> and interesting discussions based on the disagreement in this field.

1.1. In this article I want to discuss some of the most typical examples of the semantic adaptation of English loan-words in Serbo-Croatian. They follow the already accepted five member

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Phonetic Compromise". *SRAZ*, 5/1958, pp. 77—88; "Consonantal Innovations in the Phonological System as a Consequence of Linguistic Borrowing". *SRAZ*, 7/1959, pp. 39—62; "Phonemic Importation". *SRAZ*, 9—10/1960, pp. 177—189. *The Phonemic Analysis of English Loan-Words in Croatian*. Zagreb, 1960, 137 pp.; "The Morphological Adaptation of English Loan-Words in Serbo-Croat". *SRAZ*, 11/1961, pp. 91—103; "Compromise Replica and Phonemic Importation". *To Honor Roman Jakobson*. Mouton, The Hague 1967, pp. 662—666.

<sup>2</sup> "Principi lingvističkog posuđivanja I. Fonološki aspekt". *Filološki prehled*, III/1965, 1—2, pp. 117—131.

<sup>3</sup> "Principi lingvističkog posuđivanja II. Morfološki aspekt". *Filološki prehled*, IV/1966, 1—4, pp. 1—16.

<sup>4</sup> "Principi lingvističkog posuđivanja III. Semantički aspekt". *Filološki prehled*, V/1967, 1—4, pp. 83—94.

<sup>5</sup> I shall deal with the question of the terminological difficulties in Anglo-Serbo-Croatian linguistic borrowing in another article.

scale. Their adaptations consist of "most kinds of semantic change, both shifts and transfers"; they include: (1) Changes in semantic extension, (2) Ellipsis, (3) Place-name, proper noun to substantive, (4) "Pejoration" and Euphemism, (5) Metaphor.<sup>6</sup> Through the analysis of the semantic change of some English loan-words in Serbo-Croatian I intend to illustrate how English loan-words in the process of adaptation are integrated into the lexical system of Serbo-Croatian. I will show in several examples which semantic changes English loan-words can go through before they fix their meaning in Serbo-Croatian.

2.0. *Changes in semantic extension (restriction and expansion).* This is a very common feature and appears in three degrees: (a) Zero semantic extension, (b) Restriction of meaning, with specialization from a general to a technical sense, (c) Expansion of meaning from a technical to a general sense.

2.1. *Zero semantic extension* occurs when the meaning of an English loan-word after it has been integrated into the Serbo-Croatian system remains unchanged and corresponds to the meaning in English. A number of English names of drinks and food keep their meaning untouched after they have been integrated into Serbo-Croatian.

E. g.	English	Serbo-Croatian
	<i>gin</i>	<i>džin</i>
	<i>rum</i>	<i>rum</i>
	<i>whisky</i>	<i>viski</i>
	<i>beefsteak</i>	<i>biftek</i>
	<i>roast beef</i>	<i>rozbif</i>

2.2. *Restriction of meaning* is a very common feature; it begins with specialization from a general to a technical sense. Sports terminology offers some good examples.

2.2.1. One of the typical examples of the restriction of the number of meanings is the word *corner*; SOD<sup>7</sup> has recorded nine senses while in Serbo-Croatian it has only one, restricted to the technical sports term used in the Association football: "a kick from the corner of the field, allowed when the ball has been kicked by an opponent over his own goal-line".

2.2.2. The English word *goal* has behaved in the similar way. SOD records four senses; in Serbo-Croatian it has kept only the sports technical sense: (a) "the posts between which the ball must pass in order to score"; (b) "the point made by doing this". Its

<sup>6</sup> T. E. Hope, "The Analysis of Semantic Borrowing". *Essays Presented to C. M. Girdlestone*. Newcastle, 1960, p. 133.

<sup>7</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Third Edition. Oxford, 1955.

meaning has been restricted: the number of senses has been reduced following the above-mentioned principle of the restriction of meaning: specialization from a general to a technical sense.

**2.2.3.** An even more drastic restriction of meaning can be observed in the word *out* which has also followed the general way of restricting the meaning from a general to a technical sense. In Serbo-Croatian it has kept the technical sports meaning only.

**2.2.4.** Other fields offer similar examples and will be discussed later. The general tendency that in their development some terms tend to narrow their meaning has been at work also in the process of linguistic borrowing.

**3.0.** If we examine the use of the two above-mentioned English loan-words in Serbo-Croatian (*korner* and *aut*) we shall notice an interesting development in their usage. Originally they were taken over from English as technical sports terms in the rules of how to play soccer (football) or other games. In that process their meaning was restricted as we have seen above. But in the course of their use as members of the Serbo-Croatian vocabulary their meaning started to loosen its original preciseness which it had in the first stage. Recent examples from everyday written and spoken Serbo-Croatian show that in these two words there has been some loosening of the original meaning they had when they were borrowed from English.

**3.1.** The word *korner* (< E. *corner*) in addition to its original meaning "a kick from the corner of the field" which has been used in Serbo-Croatian structures:

*Mjesto s kojega se izvodi korner.*

The place from which the corner is taken.

*Korner je odlično izvelo krilo.*

The corner was brilliantly taken by the wing.

*Gol je pao direktno iz kornera.*

The goal was scored direct from the corner.

has expanded its meaning within the same field as a sports term. By doing this the word *korner* has increased its extension but its intention has been reduced. Now in addition to denoting a special kick performed from the corner of the field it also means the space (not within the field but out of the field) over the goal-line. This sense of the word *korner* seems to be even

more common than the one denoting the kick, and it represents an expansion of meaning.

E. g.:

*Bek je ubacio loptu preko linije u korner.*

\*The back kicked the ball over his own goal-line into the corner.  
The back kicked the ball over his own goal-line giving away a corner.

*Lopta je već bila u korneru.*

\*The ball was already in the corner.  
The ball was already over the goal-line.

*Gurnuo je loptu u korner.*

\*He pushed the ball into the corner.  
He pushed the ball away for a corner.

*Izvadio je loptu iz kornera.*

\*He took the ball out of the corner.  
He took the ball from over the goal-line.

3.2. The word *out* was originally borrowed as a technical word in the sports terminology (soccer, tennis, etc.) where it is used as an adjective denoting reverse of *in*. This meaning is used in games in attributive constructions.

E. g.:

*To je bila aut-lopta.*

\*That was an out-ball.  
The ball had crossed the touch-line.

By extension the sports meaning has been enriched by several senses.

E. g.:

*Bacio je aut.*

\*He threw the out.  
He took the throw-in.

*To je bio aut.*

\*That was the out.  
The ball was out of play.

*Lopta je otišla u aut.*

\*The ball went into the out.  
The ball went out of play.

*Izvadio je loptu iz auta i ubacio je u igru.*

\*He took the ball from the out and threw it into play.  
He collected the ball for a throw-in.

*Tu se sastaju linija auta i linija gola.*

\*This is where the out-line and the goal-line meet.  
This is where the touch-line and the goal-line meet.

3.3. The analysis of the above examples (3.1. *korner* and 3.2. *aut*) has proved that in addition to the general tendency which has been at work in the development of words and in linguistic borrowing, i. e. that terms tend to narrow their meaning, there is another feature in loan-words which is of reverse characteristic. Although in general when a word is borrowed by a receiv-

ing language the number of senses is reduced to one, the meaning that the loan-word has kept being an integral part of the vocabulary of the borrowing language can be expanded within its own range. The words *korner* and *aut* are two good illustrations of this new feature in semantic adaptation of loan-words.

**4.0.** The third kind of semantic change, the *change in semantic expansion*, represents the second tendency that is at work in the development of words. Our corpus offers examples of this change too, which means that this feature of semantic adaptation is present in the process of linguistic borrowing.

**4.1.** Quite a number of examples in our corpus show the expansion of meaning. This can be explained by the fact that the loan-word during the process of integration into the Serbo-Croatian system is loosening the precise meaning it had in the giving language. In the process of transferring from one language to another the "intention" of the meaning has been reduced and consequently its "extension" has been increased.<sup>8</sup> The meaning of a word is bound to be affected when the word is transferred into an entirely new linguistic milieu. This often brings about the expansion of the range.

**4.1.1.** On this basis the English word *pudding* has expanded its range when it has integrated into the Serbo-Croatian system. While in English *pudding* originally means a relatively well defined dish of food (usually a soft, sweet mixture served as a part of a meal, generally eaten after the meat course) in Serbo-Croatian the word *pudding* has loosened its sense and in the general language it approaches the meaning of a cake. Quite independently in both languages (English and Serbo-Croatian) the word *pudding* was developing in the same way: into "any solid sweet dish",<sup>9</sup> into a cake in general, into sweet.<sup>10</sup>

**4.1.2.** The word *sendvič* (< E. *sandwich*) has gone through a similar process as *pudding*. It has loosened its sense by extending the number of ingredients it can consist of. So it has become different from the English original both in the form and contents (substance). Its meaning has thus become less distinctive and more comprehensive than in English.

**4.1.2.1.** This word shows, however, an extension of meaning not only by expansion of its range but also by increasing the

---

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Ullmann, "Semantic Universals". *Universals of Language*. Ed. by J. H. Greenberg. The M. I. T. Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1963, p. 193.

<sup>9</sup> G. N. Garmonsway — J. Simpson, *The Penguin English Dictionary*. Penguin Books, 1965.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Mitford considers *sweet* as non-U for U-*pudding*. *The English Aristocracy in Noblesse Oblige*. London. 1956, p. 43.

number of senses. In Serbo-Croatian the following use of the word *sendvič* has been recorded in the sports press:

*Po trojica igrača gostiju držala su jednoga našega u sendviču.*<sup>11</sup>

\*Up to three men of the visiting side would put one of our men in a sandwich.

Up to three men of the visiting side would sandwich one of our men.

This meaning is not far from the meaning of the English verb *to sandwich* (to be sandwiched in between two other persons). The Serbo-Croatian word is, however, more expressive as it, being a noun, carries on the original meaning of the English word.

4.1.2.2. The fact that a *sandwich* is made of more ingredients in Yugoslavia than in Britain has made another semantic feature act in this case. It is popular etymology. It has changed the form of the word *sendvič* into *senfič*. The reason of this change is that the majority of Serbo-Croatian speakers who do not know English connect the word *sendvič* with one of the possible ingredients used in making a *sendvič* in Yugoslavia, *senf* (French mustard). Of course, there is also a phonological reason for this false etymology. The consonant cluster *-ndv-* is foreign, it does not exist in the Serbo-Croatian phonological system and it tends to be reduced to a two-element one *-nv-* which is assimilated into *-nf-*. The cluster *-nf-* is supported by the form of the word *senf*. The suffix *-ič* is a common formant in Serbo-Croatian and this is one more reason for the false etymology: *senf-ič*.

4.2. The expansion of meaning which is realized in the increased number of senses can be seen in the following example:

*Američki krupni biznis želio je veliko tržište za investicije.*

\*American big capital wanted to have a big market for its investments.

American big business wanted to have a big market for its investments.

The word *biznis* in its primary status in Serbo-Croatian reflects a drastic restriction of meaning which is seen in the reduction of several senses in English to one taken over and kept in Serbo-Croatian: "buying and selling, commerce, trade". In the above quoted example, however, the Serbo-Croatian word *biznis* has acquired a new sense, that of capital. The expansion of meaning in this example can be due to the fact that a foreign

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Bratoljub Klaić, *Veliki rječnik stranih riječi, izraza i kratica*. Zagreb, 1968.

word denoting a specialized meaning when it is borrowed and transferred into another linguistic milieu loosens the fixed frame of its sense and consequently expands its meaning. This expansion can work within one sense and the word expands its range; but also a new sense, which it has got in the giving language, can be added to it.

4.3. The expansion of meaning, the result of the non-linguistic, social causes, is to be seen in the semantic adaptation of the English loan-word *najlon* (< E. *nylon*). Originally when this technical term was taken over it belonged to the first group: "zero semantic extension". When later some industrial products made of nylon appeared in the market it soon became so popular that its meaning was expanded from the "synthetic fibre used for hosiery" to the more general one "synthetic resinous substances". For quite a long time the average speaker of Serbo-Croatian did not distinguish between these two words: *nylon* and *plastic*. Everything that was made of any synthetic material was given the attribute *najlon*. It was added to the substantives denoting the products really made of nylon (e. g. *najlon čarape* = nylon stockings; *najlon košulja* = a nylon shirt, *najlon bluza* = a nylon blouse) as well as to those made of plastic substance (e. g. *najlon stolnjak* = nylon tablecloth; *najlon taška* = a nylon bag).

4.3.1 The Serbo-Croatian word *najlon* acquired a new sense, the second in number, which does not exist in English. This is an example of the expansion of meaning when the loan-word increases the number of senses. The reason for this expansion is social and cultural, due to the fact that the loan-word was used by the people who did not know the origin of the imported word. The new technical terms (*nylon* and *plastic*) and the process in which they were produced were entirely unknown to the majority of users and consequently the word *nylon* could not be distinguished from *plastic*.

4.3.2. The use of the word *najlon* was spreading at a great speed and this process of spreading leads to a constant depreciation of meaning. It is rather difficult to find out the reason for the pejorative sense development of the word *najlon* in Serbo-Croatian. An example in which the pejorative development of the sense of *najlon* is felt of being at work is

*najlon-plaža*<sup>12</sup> (\*nylon, i. e. nudist beach) = the part of the beach reserved for nudists

---

<sup>12</sup> Taken from a daily paper.

Other examples quoted<sup>13</sup> for the same pejorative development are:

*najlon-hotel* = \*nylon (ill-reputed) hotel

*najlon-mentalitet* = \*nylon (primitive) character

*najlon-mozak* = \*nylon (feeble, slow, dense) mind, brains, outlook

In all of them the pejorative sense of the word *najlon* is difficult to explain. The only explanation that we can offer is that *najlon* was considered as something artificial and less good than a genuine product.

Even more difficult is to explain the pejorative sense the word *najlon* has acquired among the peasants in some villages in central Yugoslavia. There *najlon* appears in a popular song, in a humoristic context as an attribute added to a girl, a blouse, a tie and a bag.<sup>14</sup> On the whole this feature of the change of meaning, "pejoration", is not so common as the first kind, changes in semantic extension.

4.4. In the above examples of semantic change the meaning of the foreign word has remained the basis of the process of change. The original sense of the word did not disappear in the expansion or restriction of meaning. There are some English loan-words which are used in Serbo-Croatian in contexts which differ from the English ones. Their history is rather complicated and can be explained only as a result of a variety of socio-linguistic elements. We shall analyze two English loan-words of this group: the Serbo-Croatian words *bar* and *smoking*.

4.4.1. The Serbo-Croatian meaning of the word *bar* could be qualified as belonging to group two: the restriction of meaning seen in the reduction of the number of senses. The only English sense that the word *bar* has kept in Serbo-Croatian is "the room in a hotel or restaurant with counter at which drinks are served". This sense of the word *bar* is rather special and limited to modern hotels. It is a recent formation and has been recorded in the latest edition of the *Dictionary of the Literary Serbo-Croatian*<sup>15</sup> that appeared in 1967. In that Dictionary, however, this sense is given as the second meaning, less common and less spread. The first sense of the word *bar* is described as a night club. In this sense the word *bar* has been used for quite a long time. The expansion of meaning is obvious; it is, however, rather

<sup>13</sup> Taken from O. Vukomanović, "Neke semantičke promjene engleskih tuđica u srpskohrvatskom jeziku". *Pitanja književnosti i jezika Filozofskog fakulteta u Sarajevu*. II/1955, 1—2, p. 113.

<sup>14</sup> *Ib.*, p. 114.

<sup>15</sup> *Rječnik hrvatskosrpskog književnog jezika*. Matica hrvatska — Matica srpska. Zagreb — Novi Sad, 1967.

difficult to explain it. We can only say for certain that it does not originate from Serbo-Croatian. Its fate must be followed in other European languages in which *bar* has been used in this sense and not in the original one for a very long time.

4.5. When discussing the semantic adaptation of English loan-words in Serbo-Croatian we meet with examples in which the word gives up its original meaning and acquires a new one. This must have been a complicated and slow process which went through various stages and underwent several influences. This is the case with the English loan-word *smoking*. It belongs to fashion terms, the gentlemen's clothes, meaning *black tie*, *tuxedo*.

4.5.1. The etymology and the origin of the word *smoking* is to be found in the English word *smoking-jacket* or *smoking-coat*, which are recorded in *OED*<sup>16</sup> under *b.* in terms denoting things or places used for in connection with the smoking of tobacco: 1891 Peacock, N. Brendon I. 138 "He put on a smoking-coat". 1878 H. Smart, *Play or Pay*. 1, "Appearing in a radiant smoking-jacket that matched the cigar-case".

Modern dictionaries rarely quote them. *Smoking-jacket* appears, however, in some dictionaries either as an older word or without any time marker. H. C. Wyld in his *Universal Dictionary of the English Language*<sup>17</sup> defines it as "a jacket, usually braided etc., worn formerly by smokers to prevent the smell of tobacco-smoke affecting their clothes". Two American dictionaries record the word without giving any time marker. *Webster's New International Dictionary*, Third Edition, defines the word as follows: [so called fr. its orig. having been worn for after-dinner smoking]: "a man's soft dressy jacket for wear at home — compare house-coat". The *World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary*<sup>18</sup> defines the word as "a housing jacket to be worn while smoking, originally to protect clothing". The use is illustrated by a quotation from *The New Yorker*: "I wonder where I could get some genuine carpet slippers, and a fez, and a red velvet smoking-jacket".

4.5.2. The loan-word *smoking* got its modern form through ellipsis. The sense of the second part of the phrase *jacket* is transfused into its neighbour, which then acts for the complete construction after the second part has been dropped through ellipsis. The English loan-word *smoking* is used in some languages in both forms: *smoking-jacket* and *smoking*, but more often in the shortened form (*smoking*).

---

<sup>16</sup> *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. Edited by Sir James Murray.

<sup>17</sup> London, 1952.

<sup>18</sup> Edited by Clarence L. Barnhart. Chicago 1965.

In French<sup>19</sup> both forms are recorded and explained as “un veston de drap fin, très ouvert et assez habillé, que l'on porte dans les dîners et soirées de demi-ceremonie”. The first use of the whole phrase *smoking-jacket* is quoted from Bourget's *Etudes et Portraits*, II, 350, in 1889: “Vous fumerez des cigarettes russes en smoking-jacket”. The first use of the shortened form *smoking* appeared in Rostand's *Mustardies, Fleurs*, in 1890:

Nous sommes cette rose noire  
Et ce bleuet gros comme un chou  
Pour qui les smokings, sans leur moire  
Ont un oblique caoutchouc.

In German this loan-word is used in its elliptical form *smoking* denoting both a dinner-jacket and an evening suit. In Italian and in Serbo-Croatian only the elliptical form *smoking* is used in the sense of an evening suit.

The French example leads us to conclude that originally the full construction *smoking-jacket* was borrowed from English by European languages, and that it was either later or simultaneously that the elliptical form came into use. The fact that in the majority of European languages the form *smoking* is used proves that *smoking* belongs to the group of europeisms of English origin which have been drawn out from a central pool. All European languages must have contributed to this pool but at the same time they were drawing out words whenever there was a need of a loan-word in the course of cultural borrowing.

**4.5.3.** We have seen in which sense the word *smoking-jacket* was used in 19th century England and in which it was recorded in present-day dictionaries. If we compare the meaning of the English word *smoking-jacket* with the meaning which the loan-word *smoking* has acquired in several European languages including Serbo-Croatian we shall see that there is a great difference between the two. They both belong to the same group of words — men's clothes. The change of meaning that took place in the loan-word *smoking* cannot be classified as a change in semantic extension. It is neither restriction with specialization from a general to a technical sense, nor expansion with widening its range. It can be, however, considered as a kind of extension in which a special sense (*jacket for smoking*) is widened into a more general and yet special sense of an entirely different nature (the whole suit).

**5.** *Conclusion.* An analysis of English loan-words in Serbo-Croatian shows that they go through three out of the five kinds of semantic changes: 1) Changes in semantic extension; 2) El-

<sup>19</sup> Edouard Bonnaffé, *Dictionnaire étymologique et historique des anglicismes*. Paris, 1920.

lipsis;<sup>20</sup> 3) Pejoration or Derogation. In its process of integration one loan-word often undergoes two or even three changes before its meaning is finally fixed in Serbo-Croatian. Careful analysis of some loan-words has proved that the original division of the first kind of semantic change, the change in semantic extension, should be further subdivided. The above suggested<sup>21</sup> division into: (a) zero semantic extension, (b) restriction of meaning, (c) expansion of meaning, does not cover all the cases that have resulted from the analysis of English loan-words in Serbo-Croatian. Apart from the general tendency of expanding the meaning in some words and of restricting the meaning in others from the point of view of the number of senses in which they are used, there can be some changes within its range, either by increasing its extension and reducing its intention, or vice versa.

This is why on the basis of our analysis of semantic adaptation in linguistic borrowing we suggest further subdivision of groups (b) and (c) of changes in semantic extension into: b. (1) restriction of meaning in general, i. e. the loss of some senses, (2) restriction of meaning within one sense; c. (1) expansion of meaning in general, i. e. acquiring some new senses; (2) expansion of meaning within one sense.

---

<sup>20</sup> We will deal with this feature of semantic change in linguistic borrowing in a separate article.

<sup>21</sup> See p. 110.