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The Issue of English Luxury Loanwords in Romanian

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Romanian experienced, after the fall of communism, to a greater extent as compared to the period before 1989, the phenomenon of linguistic globalization manifested by borrowing words belonging to both British and American English. In the course of the two decades elapsed, many of these loanwords that rightly came into use out of an objective need to express new notions, entered dictionaries, and were integrated in the lexicon. Others are unjustifiably used. The paper brings into discussion the issue of luxury loans of English origin in Romanian lexicon.

Keywords: Anglicism, Americanism, loanword, Romanian, lexicon

Introduction

Throughout the history of mankind the contact between human communities around the world was accomplished steadily since ancient times at linguistic level, too, *as long as there could nowhere be found a completely isolated language*, (Sala 1997:9) that should not have interfered with other languages, whether they were spoken by neighbouring peoples, by minorities with which the native land was shared or, in some cases, by travellers, traders or even conquerors who passed by or settled down. This phenomenon of linguistic interference or language contact – resulting in lexical borrowing as a natural process which has been going on since the beginning of languages (Fischer and Pułaczewska 2008:20) – played a significant part in the evolution, development, enrichment of languages and communication.

This was the case with all languages and with Romanian, too, a language of Latin origin – as the amount of more than 70% of its lexicon proves – but whose particular character, as compared to other Romance languages, was conferred by the loanwords of Slav,¹ Hungarian, Turkish, and Greek origin that entered into use in the course of centuries of history in the Balkans.

¹ Camelia Firică, *Slav Influence Upon The Romanian Language – Direct References To Croatian*, Društvena istraživanja: Journal for General Social Issues, Vol.19 No.3 (107) June 2010.

...les actions qu'exercent les langues voisines jouent un rôle souvent important dans le développement linguistique. C'est que le contact des langues est une nécessité historique, et que le contact entraîne fatalement la pénétration. Sous nos yeux même, et près de nous, se trouvent des régions où l'histoire a enchevêtré comme à plaisir des peuples parlant des langues différentes; dans des régions de ce genre, l'extension des échanges commerciaux, la nécessité des communications, réclament la connaissance et la pratique courante de plusieurs langues. La péninsule des Balkans a été de tout temps et est restée un puzzle de langues, comme de races, de nationalités et de religions. Slaves, Grecs, Albanais, Roumains, Turcs, Juifs, Arméniens y forment aujourd'hui des communautés plus ou moins considérables, qui s'emmêlent sur la surface du territoire...Une pareille situation, un peu exceptionnelle dans l'Europe moderne, a dû être souvent la règle dans l'histoire. Les conséquences qui en résultent au point de linguistique sont considérables. Lorsque deux langues se trouvent en contact, elles exercent toujours plus ou moins d'action l'une sur l'autre. Partant de ce fait, certains linguistes vont même jusqu'à dire qu'il n'y a pas de langue qui ne soit à certain égard une langue mixte. Il y a donc lieu d'examiner dans quelles conditions peuvent se produire les contacts des langues et quelles sont les conséquences linguistiques de ces contacts." [Vendryes 1921:330, 331]

Without the contact Romanian had with other foreign languages it should not have had that variegated character that the relations with other peoples conferred it and the speakers would have lacked the possibility to choose, from the different morphological and syntactical constructions and from words with similar meaning, the best suited to express the deepest thoughts. Romanian borrowed foreign words and new expressions, not as a sign of scarcity of means of expression, because in many cases the loans are to be found together with old, already existing terms – as in the case of the word *time* denoted by both a Latin and a Slav word – *timp* and *vreme*. This rather proves something else: a lack of traditionalist common sense, high esteem (Campbell 2006:64) for all that is foreign, an unusual power of adaptability to any new forms, and, above all, a genuine passion to enrich the language with new possibilities of expression that is not commonplace. (Pușcariu 1976:371)

Being a *hospitable host* – one of its structural characteristic as a matter of fact – Romanian borrowed, in turns, words of Slavic, Hungarian, Turkish, Greek, German, Latin, French origin, words that covered sundry fields and part of which were adapted to the Romanian phonetic system, morphology and spelling.

Nevertheless, the process of modernization and massive enrichment of the vocabulary started during the latter half of the XVIIIth century (Pușcariu 1940; Iordan 1943) and continued in the centuries to come when Latin and French neologisms replaced the obsolete Slav, Turkish and Greek ones. Consequently, in the 80s of the XXth century, the lexical fund formed by neologisms counted more than 40. 000 not to take in consideration the technical and scientific terms (Hristea 1981:43). French was one of the pathways, alongside German and Italian, through which the first English terms became familiar to Romanians and, over time, the borrowings lost that status, they were adapted to the Romanian language phonetic, morphologic and orthographic norms and were no longer perceived as such by speakers.

Causes and reactions towards loanwords

As long as the evolution of a society is mirrored by its language – new words appearing concurrently with the object or concept they define (Graur 1978: 6) – lexical loans are genuine documents that reflect the historical, social and cultural realities and facilitate comprehensive understanding of a people's history (Dumistrăcel 1980:17-18).

The current global linguistic phenomenon of Anglicization and Americanization, very obvious, in all languages, for decades, determined by the fact that English has primacy among other languages used in communication, gains momentum more and more, being supported by social, cultural, political, financial and economic factors that nowadays are becoming increasingly prominent due to the ever growing and deeper relations that countries or individuals develop and maintain, due to the free movement of people who venture without hesitation to the other side of the world without much thought and, most importantly, due to the unprecedented possibilities of communication, which, in recent decades, the Internet gave.

After the fall of communism – the new emerging social phenomena, institutions, consumers goods or services had to be denominated by lexical units that lacked Romanian correspondents.

Transition to a market economy, the transfer to the private sector of government-owned or government-run companies, the emergency of foreign investors and multinational corporations, that entailed the emergence of new activities, services or jobs, the unlimited access to computer technology which opened new frontiers to other civilisations are just some of the new economic realities, extra linguistic factors, Romania was confronted with in the last twenty-three years.

Then, it was the direct, unprecedented contact people could have, through different channels, with a language that gained first place among the curricular options because this opened the gates to the opportunities to attend foreign educational institutions. In their pursue to break completely free from everything that meant articulation in a language that reminded an odious period, people overused the "cultivated", more "elegant" Anglicisms² and Americanisms³ and

² According to some definitions of the notion an Anglicism is:

"... a word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three), but is accepted as an item in the vocabulary of the receptor language." (Görlach 2003:1);

"Any word borrowed from English language denoting an object or a concept which is at the moment of borrowing an integral part of English culture and civilization; it need not be of English origin, but it must have been adapted to the linguistic system of English and integrated into the vocabulary of English." (Filipović 2000: 206)

"A linguistic unit (not just word but also formant, phraseological expression, meaning or grammatical construction) even type of pronunciation and / or spelling (including punctuation) of English origin, regardless of English territorial diversity." (Avram 1997: 11)

³ The term was coined by John Knox Witherspoon: "an use of phrases or terms, or a construction of sentences, even among people of rank and education, different from the same use of the same terms or phrases, or the construction of similar sentences in Great

seemed to have forgotten the common, “banal” words, even if the lack of full synonymy between the old Romanian word and the loanword distorted the semantic meaning of the statement or led to incorrect or unnatural combinations of words. (Guțu Romalo 1972:158)

„La vie favorise les transformations du vocabulaire, parce qu’elle multiplie les causes qui agissent sur les mots. Les relations sociales, les métiers, les divers outillages contribuent à transformer le vocabulaire, condamnent les vieux mots ou en modifient le sens, réclament la création de mots nouveaux. L’activité de l’esprit est sollicitée sans cesse à travailler sur le vocabulaire. Bref, en aucune matière les causes de transformation des phénomènes ne sont plus complexes, nombreuses et variées. (Vendryes 1921:226)

Nevertheless, the extended use of Anglicisms and Americanisms that may call forth the risk of language impoverishment as long as one English loanword devours a whole range of Romanian words (Pârvolescu 2007) generated a wave of reactions of the Romanian society, through its literates but ordinary people, too, who spoke against luxury Anglicisms.

In 2004 the Romanian Parliament passed, at the initiative of Professor George Pruteanu, a Bill – supported by some (Paler 1997, Grigorescu 2000, Popescu 2006, Slama-Cazacu 2005: 502) even before its submission to the Parliament and contested by others (Zarojanu 2002, Manolescu 2002) – on the use of Romanian in public relationships, places and institutions, according to which any text of public interest written or spoken in a foreign language, regardless of size, must be accompanied by its translation into Romanian. Ever since, communication of “half-learned, ignorant people who hardly speak foreign languages and hardly understand the foreign words which *bombard* them, of journalists, politicians, VIPs who make and disseminate terrible mistakes...and display the *I can speak English even if I do not know it* attitude “ (Slama-Cazacu 2005: 502) is promoted on all channels.

Anglicisms and Americanisms in Romanian

Although it was much contested and debated, being the subject of linguists’ preoccupation worldwide as early as its manifestation, this phenomenon of linguistic globalization continues to be manifest in those European countries – Romania being among them – that, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, experienced an “invasion” of Anglo-American terms. This “invasion” seems so much aggressive in Eastern European countries as they had to recover within a shorter period some

Britain. It does not follow, from a man’s using these, that he is ignorant, or his discourse upon the whole inelegant; nay, it does not follow in every case that the terms or phrases used are worse in themselves, but merely that they are not American and not of English growth. The word *Americanism*, which I have coined for the purpose, is exactly similar in its formation and significance to the word *Scotticism*.” The works of John Witherspoon, D.D., 1805, *Containing Essays, Sermons, &c. on Important Subjects*, vol. IX, *The Druid*, Number V, Edinburgh, p. 270, <http://books.google.ro>

backlogs, at linguistics level, too, of up to 1989 (Avram 1997:8). Besides countries that counterbalanced this phenomenon by imposing laws restricting the use of English in the media and public places, there are countries which overcame the national and cultural pride (Fischer and Pułaczewska 2008:20) and obsolete competitive mentalities about the linguistic supremacy (Călărășu 2003:324) of English that has become the *lingua franca* in major domains such as: international organizations and conferences; scientific publications; international banking, economic affairs and trade; advertising for global brands; audio-visual cultural products (film, TV, popular music); tourism; tertiary education; international safety; international law; technology transfer; internet communication; relay language in interpretation and translation. (Graddol 2000:8)

Paraphrasing the words of a reputed personality of the Romanian linguistics⁴ one can say that, at present, the influence of English is so strong, clear and substantiated – by the upswing of the latest technological breakthroughs – that it overshadows any other sources of lexical loans which enriched and diversified its lexicon by direct or indirect contact with other languages.

As undeniable linguistic reality imposed by the emergence of new extra linguistic realities and social needs that language must serve, Anglo-American loans cannot prejudice the Romanian language more than any other foreign influences that occurred over time as long as they are not overused; on the contrary they have contributed to the permanent renewal and modernization of the vocabulary – the most and more direct interferences manifested to this level, by borrowing terms that lacked appropriate equivalents in Romanian thus filling certain lexical gaps. (Sala 1997: 233)

Of course the men of letters and common people who protested against the linguistic globalization did not refer to denotative⁵ English loanwords that defined new notions for the Romanian lexicon, some of which being “naturalized” in Romanian – *auditor, clearing, knowhow, joint-venture, broker,*

⁴ “În momentul de față, influența englezei asupra limbii române e atât de puternică și de vizibilă, încât pune în umbră orice altă sursă de împrumuturi lexicale, de calcuri semantice și frazeologice. (At present, the influence of English upon Romanian is so strong and visible, that it overshadows any other source of lexical loans, of semantic and phraseological calques).” Rodica, Zafiu, *Între franceză și engleză*, România literară, nr. 40, 2001, http://www.romlit.ro/ntr_e_englez

⁵ Part of the *necessary loans* (Tappolet, 1913:55), “denotative Anglicisms have, as a rule, no equivalents in the recipient language - Romanian in this case - as they designate newly emerging realities in various fields such as: sports: *foțbal, baschet, schi, meci, volei, cros*, communication and media: *computer, web, e-mail, clip*, technical: *site, walkman, pager, hard, soft*, education: *master, grant*, gastronomy: *fast-food, hot-dog, hamburger, ketchup* etc. The main advantage of denotative Anglicisms is their international character which facilitates the exchange of information between specialists. To this one should add the accuracy of meaning, brevity and structure simplicity (for this reason *mass-media* is the preferred to *mijloace de comunicare în masă*. Having denominative function these terms are deprived of the expressiveness.” Adriana, Stoichițoiu-Ichim, *Vocabularul limbii române actuale. Dinamică / Influențe / Creativitate*, București, Editura All, 2008, p.85.

drive-in, duty-free, voucher, airbag, hard, soft, lap-top, hardware, mouse, fotbal (football), clown (clown), scanner (scanner), schi (ski), sendviș (sandwich), stres (stress), tenis (tennis), volei (volleyball) and so on – or whose translation would have resulted in incomprehensible, long juxtapositions or whole sentences that would have hindered communication: *banner* – *fâșie lungă de pânză pe care este scris un mesaj, un slogan publicitar*, *billboard* – *panou pentru afișarea reclamelor în locuri publice de-a lungul străzilor sau pe clădiri*, *listă cu punctele principale ale unui program în televiziune, radio*, *mass-media* – *mijloace de comunicare în masă*, *acquis* – *totalitatea elementelor standardizante, normative, legislative, asupra cărora țările UE s-au pus completamente de acord* (Pruteanu, 2006), *hot line* – *linie telefonică prin care publicul poate contacta poliția sau alte servicii pentru a da informații despre anumite situații speciale*, *grant* – *subvenție nerambursabilă acordată de stat unei persoane, unei instituții pentru realizarea, într-o perioadă de timp determinată, a unei activități de cercetare științifică sau a unei activități conexe activității științifice*.

Where the problem lies is that the use of some of these loans is not justified as long as they barely bring any further information and besides, they duplicate the existing Romanian words, which most often are replaced out of snobbishness and snugness (Hristea 1978:5)] with what is known as *luxury loans*⁶ (Tappolet 1913:55), *luxury Anglicisms* in our case (Stoichițoiu 2008:115). Useless, superfluous words, unaccounted by any cultural, scientific, economic need, (Hristea 1978:5)] as long as a word with the same meaning already exists in the recipient language. Terms like: *advertising (publicitate), agreement (acord oficial), all right (în ordine), board (consiliu), bodyguard (gardă de corp), businessman (om de afaceri), center (centru – the loan is often used in compounds: shopping centre – centru comercial), chairman (moderator, președinte al unei ședințe), dealer (vânzător intermediar), designer (desenator; proiectant), drink (băutură), drugstore (drogherie), full-time (cu normă întreagă), horror (film de groază), jogging (alergare), part-time (cu jumătate de normă), prime-time (audiență maximă), popcorn (floricele de porumb), sales manager (director de vânzări), sales person/salesman (agent comercial), showroom (sală de expoziție), showbiz (industria divertismentului), staff (salariați, angajați, personal), shop (magazin)* are but typical manifestation of *Anglomania* (Stoichițoiu 2008:95) as long as they come as doublets⁷ of the native words considered obsolete or unfashionable. They are not used out of the necessity that the assertion should be more accurate or fill a linguistic gap, but because there is a kind of trend among some representatives of some social categories to sprinkle their speeches with English loans. The irony is that many of these are not fluent in English or have not proper knowledge of either Romanian or English (Slama-Cazacu 2005: 259-268). As a matter of fact this

⁶ Romanian linguistics owes the introduction of these notions into use to the philologist, linguist and literary historian Sextil Pușcariu.

⁷ Words that double the existing Romanian words - *boss, high-life, speech, party* - in order to develop certain stylistic nuances are connotative or stylistic borrowings. They are extensively used, especially in recent years, in the political, economic, social, commercial and even everyday language and can be grouped into several categories, depending on the motivation of their use. Adriana, Stoichițoiu-Ichim, *Vocabularul limbii române actuale. Dinamică / Influențe / Creativitate*, București, Editura All, 2008, p.85.

is hardly a behaviour noticeable with cultivated, educated people. The excessive use of luxury loans does not necessarily imply cultivation or modernism, on the contrary it is a sign of superficiality in thinking and rejection of minimum intellectual effort to use Romanian words that in several circumstances proved more appropriate for communication and understanding messages.

The phenomenon has grown immeasurably greater than ever so everywhere one can hear conversation abounding in irritant barbarisms (Zafiu 2008) of the type:

board	instead of	consiliu de conducere
brand		marcă
business		afacere
cash		numerar
cheeseburger		serviș cu brânză
deadline		termen limită
discount		reducere
hamburger		serviș cu șuncă
job		serviciu, slujbă
link		legătură
live		direct
look		înfățișare, aspect
overdraft		descoperire de cont
provider		furnizor
shopping		cumpărături
show		spectacol
star		stea
talk-show		dezbateri, masă rotundă
topic		subiect
training		instructaj
workshop		atelier
to download		a descărca
to upload		a încărca
to forward		a redirecționa
to focus	a se concentra	
to implement	a transpune/pune/traduce în viață/practică	

And all this because so is *trendy* or *cool* (and not *la modă* or *extraordinar*). The wide circulation of these loanwords caused their entrance in the common vocabulary or other special languages and ultimately contributed to their entry in dictionaries (DEX 1998; DOOM 2005; Marcu, Maneca 1978; Dimitrescu 1982) without any attempt to naturalize them. What may be detrimental to Romanian is the inclination towards the exclusive use of these loanwords in media or some institutions which in this case cease to address the large mass of people that, in a overwhelming majority, fail to understand the message. What can a person that does not speak English understand from a question that sounds: *Care este target-ul dumneavoastră?* (*What is your target?*) *Target* has at least three Romanian equivalents: *obiectiv*, *țintă*, *țel* which are hardly used in mass media.

And this is only one of the many luxury loanwords that Romanian could dispose of without affecting communication.

Conclusions

The Anglo-American loanwords are welcomed in language to the extent that they can describe the new, objective reality regardless of the field where they manifest. Romanian linguistics recorded two categories of Anglicisms and Americanisms. On one hand there are the denotative terms, *necessary loans*, that came into use long ago and were adjusted according to the Romanian norms, acquiring "Romanian citizenship" (Pruteanu 2006). On the other hand, there are the *luxury loans* that continue to be used without any phonetic or graphic changes and whose use is not justified as long as they double the existing Romanian words, bring no additional information and display false intellectual pretence, linguistic snobbishness and can impoverish language.

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Pitanje engleskih luksuznih posuđenica u rumunjskom

Rumunjski je nakon pada komunizma 1989. godine, u većoj mjeri nego prije toga, doživio fenomen jezične globalizacije koji se manifestira posuđivanjem riječi iz britanskoga i američkoga engleskoga. Tijekom zadnjih dvaju desetljeća mnoge su takve posuđenice ušle u rječnike i postale integralnim dijelom leksika, a da nije postojala objektivna potreba za njihovim uvođenjem jer ne izražavaju nove pojmove. Neke se također neopravdano koriste. Ovaj se rad bavi pitanjem luksuznih posuđenica engleskoga podrijetla u rumunjskom jeziku.

Ključne riječi: anglizam, amerikanizam, posuđenica, rumunjski, leksik