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On a Projected Dictionary of Anglicisms in Danish

This paper begins by making the point that Croatian and Danish linguists are bound to have different attitudes towards Anglicisms. While the author acknowledges with gratitude the inspiration he has received from Rudolf Filipović's dictionary and his other writings, which provide a thorough analysis of direct loans, he, being Danish, has got to cast his net wider. True, direct loans loom large in Danish, but there are other important types of loans, for instance loan translations and semantic loans, that cannot be neglected by a Danish dictionary compiler if he is to avoid presenting a lopsided picture of the true extent of English influence on Danish. It is imperative to try to pinpoint instances of indirect influence, not least because they tend to be overlooked by most language-users.

In 1990 I was very gratified to receive from Rudolf Filipović a presentation copy of his ANGLICIZMI U HRVATSKOM ILI SRPSKOM JEZIKU. At that time I had decided to embark on a similar project: a dictionary of Anglicisms in Danish, and this handsome book gave me an opportunity to consider once more a problem that we had discussed on earlier occasions: A Croatian's and a Dane's different attitudes towards Anglicisms. For a difference there is, and in my view it can be accounted for if one considers the different relationships between on the one hand English and a Slavonic language, and on the other hand English and a much more closely related Germanic language. I am almost totally ignorant about Slavonic languages, so I ask forgiveness if I am mistaken; but it is my distinct impression that a Slavonic linguist, facing the task of compiling a dictionary of Anglicisms, would concentrate almost exclusively on direct loans, that is, loanwords which reveal their foreign origin through their form, while other manifestations of English influence would be insignificant. A Danish linguist would of course also devote a good deal of attention to direct loans, which in Danish are the largest group of loans. But if his intention is to give a true picture of the full extent of English influence on Danish, he will have to cast his net much wider. This is the topic that I intend

to expatiate on in the pages that follow, which describe the types of loans that I operate with.

As mentioned, **direct loans** are the most numerous. In my definition, a direct loan is either adopted in exactly the same form that it has in English (e. g. *aftershave*, *brunch*, *cityscape*, *drugstore*, *spleen*), or it is adapted to conform to Danish. For instance, English *emirate* becomes Danish *emirat*, *abortive* becomes *abortiv*, and verbs like *detect* and *panic* appear in Danish as *detekttere* and *panikke*. One consequence of this tendency towards adaptation is that in a number of cases Anglicisms come to have exactly the same form as already existing Danish words. Thus the verb *spot* becomes *spotte* in Danish, coinciding with the Danish verb *spotte*, which means 'to ridicule'. However, there is no serious danger of misunderstanding since the two verbs occur in different contexts.

Anglicisms that are not direct loans fall into a number of types, the two most important ones being **loan translations** and **semantic loans**. The majority of the loan translations are compound nouns in which each of the items translates an English noun; thus, from *maiden voyage* is formed *jomfrurejse*, from *body language*, *kropssprog*, from *metal fatigue*, *metaltæthed*, and from *time horizon*, *tidshorison*. In these cases the English source of the Anglicisms is premodifying noun + noun. But other English patterns produce the same result in Danish, for instance adjective or participle + noun: *canned laughter* > *dåselatter*, *hotspur* > *hedspore*; or noun + *of* + noun: *flag of convenience* > *bekvemmelighedsflag*, *frame of reference* > *referenceramme*. Since translation is involved in this type, it is not very surprising that there are occasional instances of the same English expression being rendered in more than one way. For instance *credibility gap* appears in Danish both as *tillidskløft* and *troværdighedskløft*, *leatherneck* both as *læderrnakke* and *læderhals*, and *white-wash* in its figurative sense, 'to conceal, gloss over', both as *hvidvaske* and *renvaske*.

We turn next to **semantic loans**, which are Anglicisms in disguise, as it were. They are insidious, being only recognized by language-users who have a thorough knowledge of English and who are in a position to note when one sense of an English word affects the meaning of the corresponding Danish word. Take high-frequency verbs like *buy* and *sell*, corresponding to *købe* and *sælge*. Until recently the two Danish verbs were on the whole confined to uses connected with financial transactions. But after *buy* had developed the sense 'to accept, believe (a story, an opinion)' and *sell* could be used in the sense 'to gain acceptance of (an idea)', these new senses were superimposed on the Danish verbs. It is the same with *flagship*, corresponding to *flagskib*. Some time after the English word had developed the sense 'the best or most important one of a group or system', this sense was transferred to the Danish word. There are numerous examples of this kind of semantic transfer in contemporary Danish, and they present a confusing picture. It is possible, however, to distinguish certain types. For instance, some English names of objects have had their semantic sphere of application extended, so that they can figuratively refer to people: *a doormat*, apart from its inanimate sense, also means 'a per-

son whom others trample upon', and the corresponding Danish word *dørmåtte* has undergone the same semantic extension owing to English influence. Conversely, some English terms that originally described people have come to be used with reference to non-persons; *a candidate* used to mean 'a person who seeks an office', but can now also mean 'something that is suitable or likely for a particular fate or position' (as in *That idea is a candidate for the wastepaper basket*), and both senses can now be attested in Danish *kandidat*. Probably the most surprising impact of semantic loans is the one manifested in the recent use of Danish prepositions. The forms of some prepositions are similar or identical in the two languages, and this fact may have facilitated semantic influence. Anyway, the Danish preposition *under*, whose central sense is 'directly below', has now come to be used in the English-inspired sense 'in accordance with (a law, etc.)'.

A cross between direct adoption and translation is formed by the **hybrids**, in which native and foreign material is combined. In most cases the English element precedes the native, thus in *donkeykedel* 'donkey boiler', *slumsøster* 'slum sister', and *jobberigelse* 'job enrichment'. But there are also examples of the opposite order: *blodscreening* 'blood screening', *fiskefarm* 'fish farm', and *hårspray* 'hair spray'.

In numerous cases there is competition between direct loans and translations. At the moment there appears to be equilibrium between *designer* and its Danish equivalent *formgiver*, between *entertainer* and *underholder*, between *eskalere* (< *escalate*) and *optrappe*, and between *marketing* and *markedsføring*. Sometimes it is the direct loan that dominates; this is true of *bestseller* vs. *bedstsælger*, of *feedback* vs. *tilbagemelding*, and of *airbag* vs. *ratpude*. In other cases it is the translation that is most frequently used: *flykaprer*, *hjerneflugt*, and *tænketank* are more frequent than *hijacker*, *braindrain*, and *think tank*. It appears to be difficult to predict whether the direct loan or the translation will be victorious. There are conflicting tendencies. At the beginning of this century, when football was becoming popular, a defensive player immediately in front of the goalkeeper was often termed *bagmand*, but it was *back* that in the end was victorious. Until about 1970 the direct loan *hearing* 'a session in which testimony and arguments are presented' was practically the only form employed, but today it has been superseded by the translation equivalent *høring*.

The remaining types of Anglicisms that I operate with are statistically of less importance, but still far from being negligible. There are the **formal adaptations** that are created when a Danish word whose meaning corresponds to the meaning of an English word undergoes a change that brings its form closer to English. Corresponding to English *cheque book* we have as the normal form in Danish the word *checkhæfte*; but occasionally the form *checkbog* occurs as an approximation to English. Similarly, what used to be *busstoppested* is now often *busstop* owing to English *bus stop*; *rekordindehaver* becomes *rekordholder* (< English *record-holder*), and *levefod* tends to be crowded out by *levestandard* (< *living standard*). What used to be *udklassere* is now often *udklasse* on the analogy of English *outclass*, and the forms *sideeffekt* and

sidevirkning (< English *side effect*) tend to oust the traditional form *bivirkning*.

In recent decades Anglo–American acronyms and other abbreviations have become a prominent feature especially of Danish newspaper language. From the point of view of pronunciation there are two subtypes: those whose elements form a pronounceable item: *GATT*, *OPEC*, *NATO*, and those consisting of initials that have to be pronounced separately: *CSCE*, *IBCM*, *WTO*. These initialisms, often designating international organizations, are a mixed blessing. On the one hand their brevity makes them suitable for newspaper headlines; on the other hand some of them are apt to confuse the reader since they may stand for more than one thing: the three letters *CAP* represent both *Common Agricultural Policy* (an EU concept) and *Computer–Aided Publishing*, and there are other similar cases of ambiguity.

We come next to what may be termed **indirect Anglicisms**. These may arise as analogical — but unEnglish — formations once an English word has established itself in Danish. For instance, American English *Bible Belt* appears in Danish as the loan translation *bibelbæltet*, and similarly we have *solbæltet* from *the Sun Belt*. These and other loan translations have triggered the creation of the so-called *whiskybælte* ('whisky belt'), an area north of Copenhagen inhabited by prosperous people who are assumed to be able to afford whisky; but there is no corresponding term in English. The term (*football*) *hooligan* has given rise to a popular antonym, *roligan*, a kind of blend consisting of the first part of the Danish adjective *rolig* 'quiet' and the last two syllables of *hooligan*; *roligan* means 'a well-behaved spectator at football matches'. In this connection it may be added that a number of direct loans from English may combine with Danish affixes to form hybrids for which there exist no English equivalents. A case in point is the verb *forslumme*, which means 'to turn into a slum', and loanwords like *bodybuilder* and *partner* are often supplied with the Danish feminine suffix *-ske* to produce unEnglish forms: *bodybuilderske*, *partnerske*.

The type of indirect Anglicism just dealt with may lead on to a brief discussion of **pseudo-Anglicisms**, which are numerous in Danish. There are a number of subtypes, usually born of ignorance. English words like *dropout* and *phone freak* may occur with an unwarranted *-er* ending: *drop-out'er*, *phone-freaker*. Conversely, the obligatory *-ing* ending in words like *airconditioning* and *infighting* usually disappears in Danish, leading to the incorrect forms *air-condition* and *infight*. Words like *killjoy* and *spoilsport* may be corrupted into *joykiller* and *game-spoiler*, and the *-s* in the games of *darts* and *mixed doubles* is often dropped, producing *dart* and *mixed double*. There are many similar examples.

Up till now we have surveyed the various types of loans that manifest themselves in Danish. But this is not the whole story, for besides, English influence on Danish makes itself felt in a large-scale adoption of **idioms** and **proverbs**.

As far as idioms are concerned, some appear as direct loans, for instance *anything goes*, *the point of no return*, *small is beautiful*, and *you name it*. More

frequently, however, idioms are translated: *manden, som medierne elskede at hade* 'the man whom the media loved to hate'; *at leve på lånt tid* 'to live on borrowed time'; *gå fra styrke til styrke* 'go from strength to strength'; *skyde sig selv i foden* 'shoot oneself in the foot', and many more. A number of proverbs appear in translation, for instance *slippe katten ud af sækken* 'let the cat out of the bag'; *græde over spildt mælk* 'cry over spilt milk'; *spænde vognen foran hesten* 'put the cart before the horse'. It is interesting to note that sometimes English proverbs are translated into Danish even in cases where there exists in Danish a proverb having the same import as the English loan.

A discussion of the ways in which Danish is influenced by English would be incomplete without some comments on syntax. It is often difficult to prove that English syntax influences Danish because we are talking of cognate languages that share many patterns. However, if a Danish construction deviates from normal usage and at the same time has a close resemblance to an English construction, it is reasonable to assume English influence. For instance, in Danish the anaphorical use of pronouns (noun followed by pronoun) is the norm, while in English cataphora (pronoun preceding noun) is widespread. When the latter construction appears in Danish, one may well suspect English influence. A similar case is premodification vs. postmodification. Contemporary English has greater scope for premodification than Danish. When formulations like *under-the-table agreements* and *the 1905 revolt* have Danish equivalents like *under-bordet aftaler* and *1905-oprøret*, it is probably the English pattern that is at work, for traditional Danish prefers postmodified formulations like *aftaler under bordet* and *oprøret i 1905*. — For further details concerning probable syntactic influence from English I refer readers to my article 'English Influence on Contemporary Danish', 109–120, in *The English Element in European Languages*, Vol. 2, edited by Rudolf Filipović, Zagreb 1982, and my book *Engelsk i dansk*, Copenhagen 1995, 143–166.

I hope I have given an impression of the many ways in which English influence on Danish manifests itself. Statistically, the direct loans are the most important, but the other types of influence that I have discussed are very important too, not least because these non-direct loans are insidious, only revealing themselves for what they are to the specialist. While the direct loans, being obvious foreign elements, give rise to protest and indignation on the part of many Danes, the other types stand a better chance of becoming accepted since most Danes do not realize that they are also Anglicisms, and this fact places them in a stronger position than they are statistically entitled to hold.

I first met the dedicatee of this double volume some twenty years ago at a conference. Later he visited Aarhus University to give some lectures, and I reciprocated by giving lectures at Zagreb University. A fruitful correspondence developed between us, and in retrospect I fell grateful for the inspiration he gave me, through personal contact and through his many publications.

O projektu Rječnika anglicizama u danskom jeziku

Na početku rada iznosi se zapažanje kako hrvatski i danski jezikoslovci različito gledaju na problem anglicizama. Izražavajući zahvalnost za nadahnuće što ga je našao u Rječniku anglicizama i drugim radovima Rudolfa Filipovića koji omogućuju iscrpnu raščlambu izravnih posudenicama, autor ističe kako je njegovo proučavanje anglicizama u danskome moralo obuhvatiti i neizravne posudenicama. Iako doduše danski jezik obiluje izravnim posudenicama, tu su i drugi značajni tipovi posudenicama kao što su prevedenice i semantičke posudenicama koje sastavljač rječnika anglicizama u danskom ne smije zanemariti želi li izbjeći jednostranu sliku stvarnoga opsega engleskoga utjecaja na danski jezik. Nužno je utvrditi primjere neizravnoga jezičnoga utjecaja, između ostaloga i stoga što većina porabnika jezika nije svjesna njihova postojanja.