THE USE OF ENGLISH-LOAN WORDS IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DOMAIN

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Abstract: *This paper examines the phenomenon of linguistic borrowings in general and the use of anglicisms in particular, in the contexts of globalization and the progress made in different domains, especially in the Information Technology domain. Borrowing is the phenomenon which undertakes the word transmission process from one language into another among the connected communities. The language that lends is the donor or the borrower language, and the language that borrows is known as the receptor or the borrowing language. Anglicisms are the English-loan words that are present in many European languages. The phenomenon of globalisation is the main topic of several contradictory and polarization discussions and undoubtedly globalisation is necessary and it is a fact in today's world but the question is: what will be the long-term language consequences? There might be two situations: the consequences may be positive, such as ease of communication and perception, language economics and also negative: not understanding anglicisms resulting in disturbed communication, rejection of anglicisms, loss of semantic diversity of your own language, less and less possibilities of expressing yourself in your own language. We can mention that responsible for the impact of English is the prestige associated with this language. This language is generally held in highest regard by the younger generation of Romanians, who are easily influenced by the television, radio, movies, and other media that are supplied by British and American entertainment, which are considered to be trendy and cool. Each of those resources has influenced the Romanian population on numerous levels, creating new words and phrases in the Romanian language. In order to illustrate and discuss the pertinent or, on the contrary, the unjustified use of English-loan words in the field of Information Technology, the study will focus on a selection of articles published in the electronic Romanian issues of two computer and communications magazines – namely Chip Magazine and PC World. Different stances, adopted in relation to the phenomenon mentioned above, and the understanding of two groups of Romanian readers (students at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology, University of Oradea) will be presented.*

Keywords: anglicisms, professional discourse, the IT domain

JEL classification: Y90

1. Introduction: the role of English in the context of globalization

Nowadays, English is spoken by about 375 million people in the world as their first language; approximately 470 million to over a billion individuals use it as a second language (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language). It thus comes third, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish (CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook), in the classification of world

languages made in terms of number of speakers. Most people and specialists tend to agree that English has become the dominant language of the contemporary world (Crystal, 2003:1-3), mainly as a result of a long history of British and American influence in the economic, technologic, military, political and cultural fields. The progress made in the aforementioned domains has often placed specialists in the situation of having to express in words new, extra-linguistic realities; as there were no direct correspondents in their national languages people chose to reproduce or adapt denominations from English, thus enriching their vocabulary with new terms and expressions - the so-called *anglicisms*. The rapid advances in certain areas and disciplines also determined the formation of new constructs, originating in English, but influenced by the language and culture of different speakers (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language), and the generation of many "forms" of English, dialects and regional varieties (Townson, 1995).
Another aspect that has stimulated the use of English at global scale is the open access of people to products and services from all around the world, as well as the widespread use of the Internet, which has somehow determined the adoption of English as an international medium of communication. As a result, a good knowledge of English has become a necessity in different fields of human activity, from economy and computing to medicine, art, education and diplomacy. Nowadays, different degrees of proficiency in English influence not only people's mobility across nations, but also their access to jobs and cultural products.
The reactions to such a state of affairs (i.e. the more or less official turning of English into a lingua franca) has grouped people in two main categories: on the one hand, there are the Anglophones, who argue that the use of English, or at least of English-loan words, is by no means a negative fact: on the contrary, they insist it may facilitate understanding and communication among people, in the context of the contemporary world, where activities in different domains are no longer restricted to national borders; on the other hand there are voices suggesting that the expansion of English represents a threat, having negative influence upon linguistic diversity, at the same time creating unequal power-relationships among languages and determining even the "globalization" of thinking.

2. The problem of English-loan words

The presence of English-loan words is not confined to a single language, this being a frequently encountered phenomenon. As pointed out in the previous section of this paper, linguistic borrowings, especially from the English language, are chiefly the result of the economic and technological progress constantly made in the West, which brings about permanent innovation in different fields of activity, alongside the introduction of new products and services, which are rapidly exported in many countries of the world. National languages do not immediately generate new words for these new, extra-linguistic realities. The process of language rejuvenation is rather slow, as compared to the economic or the technological progress, and only the widespread and prolonged use of a certain word determines its adoption into a certain language, and the generation of synonyms for it, in the respective national language. Therefore, for the sake or rigor mainly, when certain words do not have any equivalent in a specific language, or an element in reality may be described and referred to only by using a longer phrase, the tendency is to adopt the original word (an Anglicism, in the case of the English language). Linguists such as Sextil Puşcariu (Puşcariu, 1976) described such borrowings as *necessary* (this word, as well as others used for the further classification of the anglicisms present in Romanian, has been also borrowed by Adriana Stoichiţoiu-Ichim, Laura Maria Rus, while the phenomenon has been closely analyzed by Mioara Avram (Avram, 1997), Georgeta Ciobanu (Ciobanu, 1996) or Liana Silaghi (http://www.culturasicomunicare.com/v3/Silaghi%20%20Anglicismele%20in%20discursul%20jurnalistic.pdf). Examples of such words are chiefly encountered in the following fields:

- economy: *leader* (which, in different languages has been slightly modified, either by articulation or in order to reproduce the pronunciation of that particular language: for instance in Romanian: lider; in French: le leader), *broker* (Romanian: broker; French: un broker), *management*, *marketing, voucher* (document that may be used instead of money); the last three words given as an example here have been adopted as such in most languages.
- information technology and communication: *e-mail*, *hardware, software*, *mouse* (sometimes the spelling has been changed: for instance, in Romanian, one can sometimes come across the spelling *maus*; the same holds true for the word *clic* – from the English word *click*) etc.
- sports: *football* (Romanian: fotbal - the word is spelled in a way that reflects the way the pronunciation of the original word has been perceived; French: le football), *rugby, match* (Romanian: meci – again, as Romanina is a phonetic language, the word started to be spelled as it was pronounced);
- the technical domain: *airbag, screening* (medical examination using X-Rays), *scanning* (Romanian: scanare);
- education: *curriculum, grant, master*;
- gastronomy: *hamburger, sandwich, shake*.

As the examples above illustrate, anglicisms are adopted in the absence of adequate or sufficiently illustrative terms in different languages spoken throughout the world.

Researchers such as Laura Maria Rus (http://www.upm.ro/facultati_departamente/stiinte_litere/conferinte/situl_integrare_europeana/Lucrari/LauraRus.pdf), or Adriana Stoichiţoiu-Ichim (http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/filologie/dindelegan/24.pdf) further classify necessary borrowings into:

a. denotative, characteristic of certain domains and which facilitate the communication among specialists (for instance, in the IT domain, we can mention the word *hardware, joystick, on-line, pointer*); and

b. connotative, or stylistic, which develop the stylistic nuances of a word that already exists in a certain language: in the case of anglicisms, we can give the example of *happy end, weekend, party.*

In time, the widespread use of such loan-words has determined their adaptation to the graphic, phonetic, grammatical or even the semantic rules of the "host" language, which often results in words that are not encountered in the English language. These words are called "pseudo-anglicims" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudo-anglicism#Romanian), as they are transformed in such a way that they become unrecognizable to a native English-speaker. The examples below may be considered indicative in this respect:

- in French: baby foot (for table football); baskets (in Romanian bascheţi) for the English word "trainers"; box (also in Italian), for the English „garrage"; footing (also in Italian and Spanish) for jogging;
- in Spanish: boxer, for the Enghish „boxer shorts"; peeling (present in other European language) used to refer to facial or body scrub; snow, as an abbreviation of snowboard; lifting (also in other European languages) for "facelift";
- in Ialian: autogrill, for „motorway shack bar"; bar for „cafe"; hostess, for female flight attendant, stewardess;
- in German: air-condition, as an abbreviation from „air-conditioning"; fotoshooting, for „photo session"; home trainer for "exercise bicycle"; logical, for puzzle or riddle to be solved by logical thinking;
- in Romanian: camping, for "campsite"; happy-end, for "happy ending"; playback, for lip-synch (in songs) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudo-anglicism).

As indicated above, pseudo-anglicisms suffer different changes in order to be adapted to the rules of each host language in particular. The following transformations are the most frequently encountered ones:

- formal changes (graphic and phonetic adaptation):
  English: football player – Romanian: fotbalist;
  English: tennis player – Romanian: tenismen – French: le tennisman;
  English: interview - Romanian: interviu – French: interview;
  English: leader – Romanian: lider - French – le leader.
- the assignation of gender or number, or the articulation of words:
  English: fax – Romanian: faxul
  English: cinema stars – Romanian: staruri de cinema
  English: design – Romanian: un design
  English: cocktai – Romanian: cocteiluri
- the derivation with prefixes, for instance the prefix "super", encountered in many European languages;
- semantic transformations, as English words are associated with new meanings: spot [English: mark, patch, dot, smear, stain, blotch, location (*Oxford Paperback Thesaurus*, 2001:817), etc.].; in Romanian one may encounter: spot publicitar, as an equivalent of the English word "commercial".
- The abbreviation of certain Engish words, generating new words in the host language: le pull (from the pullover), McDo (from McDonald's) (http://www.seikilos.com.ar/Anglicisms.pdf), le foot, short form of the French word "le football" (http://www.elle.fr/elle)

Besides the necessary borrowings, a language may adopt a series of redundant words, a situation that mainly results from the attempt of some social categories to be distinguished from others: this fashion is often associated with snobbery (http://www.upm.ro/facultati_departamente/stiinte_litere/conferinte/situl_integrare_europeana/Lucrari/LauraRus.pdf). As we are going to emphasize in the next section of this paper, contemporary written press, even magazines related to the field of IT, abounds in words derived from English.

While the "necessary" borrowings tend to be eventually accepted even by the most vehement supporters of language purity, it is the abusive, excessive use of anglicisms that is usually rejected and criticized.

In conclusion, the presence of anglicisms in a certain language should not be regarded as a purely negative aspect, or simply as a form of linguistic globalization, though it is recommendable to avoid exaggerations.

3. Anglicisms used in the IT domain

During the last decades, the language used by many specialists in the field of IT, and often by editors of computer magazines, has been enriched with a great number of English-loan words. Some of them are professional words, which are used by people working in this domain all around the world, while others reflect just the fashion of using English words and phrases, characterizing many young persons in our country.

This situation is mainly explained by the fact that most progress in the field of information technology has been done in the English-speaking world, and most books, studies and articles presenting the evolution in the domain have been published in English. Those preparing for a career or already working in the IT domain used such materials or took part to educational and training programs in the West, where the language of communication was, in most cases, English. Consequently, they have adopted and sometimes adapted to the rules of the Romanian language many English words.

As mentioned in the section above, the use of anglicisms related to the IT domain is justified in some cases: for instance, there are situations when the use of a single word in English may faithfully reflect some reality, which otherwise would have required the use of more than one word in Romanian. We can give here the example o the word *hardware*, which has no direct correspondent in Romanian and refers to the physical components of a

computer – namely the circuits, devices and equipments that make up a calculating system.
On the other hand, there are some words that are difficult to translate without producing semantic ambiguity. In order to illustrate this statement, we can give the example of the word *mouse*, which in computing refers to a pointing device, but in general the term refers to a small rodent. In Romanian it has been adopted as such, though lately its spelling appears adapted to the rules of our language (it appears written as *maus*, plural *maus-uri* (http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maus).
However, there are also many words of English origin that have penetrated the vocabulary of people activating in the field of IT, which have no objective justification to be used, as they can be easily translated in Romanian, or replaced by convenient equivalents. To give but a few examples, we can mention here the words such as *taskbar* (bara de start/meniu), *icon* (pictograma), *emoticon* (emotigrama), *device* (dispozitiv) which are generally adapted to the Romanian and often appear articulated (taskbar-ul, language bar-ul, emoticoane).
The ideas mentioned above can easily be illustrated while analyzing a selection of articles that have recently appeared in the online issues of two computer magazines, published in several countries of Europe and Asia, Romania included.
For instance, Razvan Stefanescu, editor PC World, in the article entitled "*Top 10 video playere in teste*", published in PC World Magazine online, 9 decembrie 2010, speaking about the video formats of different systems, says at one point: "aşteptare pe care o aveam de la un *player media* era să ruleze fişiere DivX", "ne-am gândit să facem un *roundup* la cele mai răspândite programe de *playback video*" (http://www.pcworld.ro/articole/18655/0/Top-10-video-playere-in-teste-) ("the expectations that we have from a *media player* is to rule DivX files", "we thought to make a *roundup* to the most widely used programs of *video playback*"). Thus, the plural noun-phrase "video players" (referring to a kind of media device used for playing back digital video data from media such as optical discs - for example, DVD, VCD-, as well as from files of appropriate formats) has been adapted to the Romanian orthography and has become pluralized as "video-playere", though a word-order that is specific to Romanian, rather than to English, has been preserved (player media, playback video), as in English a noun-modifier is usually placed before a noun. As it can be observed, some of these words have become pseudo-anglicisms. In the case of the word "roundup", probably the Romanian equivalent "trecere in revistă" would have been equally appropriate, which makes it a denotative anglicism.
In the same magazine, the presentation of a new model of PC tablet, namely HTC Flyer TM, abounds in English-loan words: tablet PC – tabletă PC (which, by articulation or assignation of case, takes the form tablet PC-ul, or Tablet PC-ului), touch – atingere - ("combină interacţiunea naturală de tip *touch* cu aceea prin HTC Flyer" – combines the touch-type natural interaction with that through HTC Flyer), mobile gaming, cloud-based ("primul serviciu de *gaming* mobil *cloud-based* disponibil pe un Tablet PC" – the first service of cloud-based mobile gaming available on a Tablet PC), smart-phone (becoming smartphone-urile, by articulation and assignation of plural, referring to very recent generations of mobile phones), gadget, hardware, widget (words that are commonly used as such in Romanian, as they either have no one-word equivalent and their explanation would have required more space in the body of the article, or have become so common that the use of another word instead would seem unusual, especially to a specialist in the IT domain); however, there are also anglicisms which could easily have been replaced by Romanian equivalents: on demand (la cerere), wireless (fară fir), download (descărcare), software (programe). Probably words such as "cloud-based" or gaming are more easily understood in their English form, even by Romanian readers (http://www.pcworld.ro/articole/18694/0/HTC-prezinta-HTC-Flyer-primul-Tablet-PC-cu-HTC-Sense).

Actually, in my opinion, the abundance of English-loan words is characteristic for the PC World magazine. This shouldn't probably be a mater for worry, as readers of such magazines are most probably familiar with the terminology of English origin. However, an article such as the one written by Carmen Ciulacu, entitled "Seria 6 de placi de baza Gigabyte: experienta 3D, conectivitate rapida", published on the 7th of January 2011, in the PC World online magazine, might cause problems of understanding to a person that is not very much acquainted with the field of IT. Perhaps it would be worth mentioning here that the selection of the following fragments from the above-mentioned article is meant just to illustrate a point, and not to criticize it, as publications in the field of IT can probably objectively justify the abundance of English-loan words in the corpus of their articles:
"… ne aşteptăm ca *socketul* LGA 1155 să fie pe piaţă pentru mulţi ani de acum înainte," a comentat Tim Handley, *Deputy Director* al Departamentului de Marketing pentru Plăci de Bază de la GIGABYTE. "Suntem încântaţi să încorporăm multe dintre caracteristicile *high-end* pe plăcile de bază *mainstream* şi *entry level*, cum ar fi designul Max CPU Power VRM care a fost introdus pentru prima dată pe modelul X58A-UD9, pentru a da astfel produselor noastre un avantaj competitiv serios pe piaţă.*"* (…) "Având mai multe *porturi* USB 3.0 (până la 10 pe P67A-UD7), seria 6 de plăci de bază de la GIGABYTE oferă conectivitate extrem de rapidă pentru *drive-urile de backup* portabile de tip *flash* sau externe (până la de 10x viteza unui USB 2.0). (…). Împreună cu SATA 6Gbps, tehnologia GIGABYTE XHD ofera o creştere a performanţelor de până la 4x (…) cu ajutorul unui utilitar simplu şi intuitiv, ce permite utilizatorilor să *boot-eze* sistemul şi să lanseze aplicaţiile mai rapid decât au crezut vreodată că este posibil." (http://www.pcworld.ro/articole/18660/0/Seria-6-de-placi-de-baza-Gigabyte-experienta-3D-conectivitate-rapida) ("we expect that the LGA 1155 socket would be present on the market many years from now on", said Tim Handley, Deputy Director at the Marketing department for motherboards at GIGABYTE. "We are glad to incorporate many of the high-end characteristics on the mainstream and entry level motherboards, for instance the Max CPU Power VRM design, which was first introduced on the X 58A-UD9 model, in order to ensure our products a serious competitive advantage on the market" (…). "As it has several 3.0 USB ports (up to 10 on P67A-UD7), the series of 6 motherboards from GIGABYTE ensure extremely rapid connectivity for either flash-type or external portable backup drivers (up to 10x times the speed of a 2.0 USB). (…) Alongside the SATA 6Gbps, the XHD GIGABYTE technology provides an increase of performance of up to 4x (…) with the help of a simple and intuitive tool that allows users to boot the system and launch applications more rapidly that they have ever thought it might be possible".)
In this article, words such as *driver de backup* or the pseudo-anglicism *să boot-eze* could have easily been replaced by their Romanian alternatives, respectively fişier/memorie de siguranţă, and să încarce, să pornască. Others, such as mainstream or entry level, port or flash, though not impossible to be replaced, probably make the context easier to understand.
In this case again one can observe that the author has used structures form the foreign language, adapting them to Romanian (socketul, drive-urile, porturi, să boot-eze), or borrowed words as they appear in the original language and simply placed them in a new context (mainstream, entry level, deputy director, backup).
A similar tendency of using anglicisms in the corpus of articles, addressed to Romanian readers, is a characteristic of the Chip Magazine Romania. However, in our opinion, the anglicisms are less frequent here than in the other computer magazine referred to in this paper. To give but two examples, we can quote some fragments from Cristina Costieanu's article entitled "Retuşarea foto profesională", who uses the following anglicisms: "editarea *high end***"**, "modificările sunt aplicate asupra *layer-ului* de fundal", "chiar dacă suntem în era *layer-elor* de ajustare şi a *smart filter-urilor*", "cu ajutorul tehnicii Smart Objects puteţi utiliza orice filtru în acelaşi mod în care folosiţi *un layer* de ajustare. În principiu, există două moduri de a crea un *Smart Object*: în Photoshop CS3 daţi **clic** pe opţiunea Convert

for Smart Filters din meniul *Filter* şi numai după aceea aplicaţi filtrul dorit." (http://www.chip.ro/revista), ("high end editing", "the changes that are applied to the background layer", "even though we are in the era of adjustment layers and smart filters", "'with the help of Smart Objects technique one can use any filter in the same way one uses an adjustment layer. Basically there are two ways to create a Smart Object: in Photoshop CS3 click the option Convert for Smart Filters from the Filter menu, and only then apply the desired filter").

In our opinion, words such as *layer* or *smart-filter* might have been replaced by their Romanian alternatives (strat, filtru avasat/inteligent), while the words *Smart Objects* or *Convert for Small Filters*, as they refer to certain techniques or applications, are appropriately used in the original language.

Another example would be the article published on 25th of February2011, by Cătălin Constantin and entitled Windows 3 in 1,"De exemplu, în loc de plictisitoarele *taskbar-uri* ale Windows-ului, puteţi avea un Dock folositor cu *icon-uri* 3D şi funcţii bine implementate. Cu ajutorul unor shortcut-uri interesante puteţi obţine efecte spectaculoase la manipularea ferestrelor, dar şi activa o modalitate de previzualizare a documentelor. Şi asta nu e tot! Mac OS X are mult mai multe de oferit, cum ar fi de exemplu *Time Machine*, aplicaţie cu ajutorul căreia timpul poate fi dat înapoi în cazul unei întâmplări nefericite în care s-au pierdut date. Toate aceste elemente de funcţionalitate pot fi uşor adăugate *Windows-ului* şi chiar mai mult. Puteţi de exemplu să adăugaţi funcţii multitouch pe notebook sau să porniţi o sesiune de linie de comandă Linux (…) Instrumentele şi *tweak-urile* din acest articol funcţionează în mod independent." (http://www.chip.ro/revista/chip/16355-windows-3-in-1) ("For example, instead of the boring taskbars of Windows sites, you can have a useful Dock with 3D icons and well implemented functions. With the help of some interesting shortcuts you can get spectacular results in the handling of windows, and activate a way of previewing documents. And that's not all! Mac OS X has much more to offer, such as for example Time Machine, application by which time can be recovered in case of undesirable situations when data have been lost. All these functionality elements can be easily added to Windows – and even more. You can add multi-touch features on your notebook or start a Linux command line session (...) The tools and tweaks in this article function independently.")

Here, the words *taskbar* or *icon* could have been replaced by Romanian equivalents (*bară de start/meniu*, and *pictogramă*), while Windows and Time Machine are probably better used as such.

In order to check the understanding, by Romanian readers, of these fragments selected from computer magazines, we have asked a group of 40 students studying Computer Science at the Faculty of Electric Engineering and Information Technology, and 40 students of the same faculty, but intending to specialize in the Electrical Engineering domain, to say whether their understanding of the above-reproduced texts has hindered their understanding. In the case of the computer science students, the large majority (29 students) said that they had encountered no difficulty in understanding the texts. Even more, they wanted to point out that the choice of other words instead of the anglicisms or pseudo-anglicisms selected for analysis would have made the way of expression quite unnatural. The rest (11 students) were of the opinion that only few words caused them difficulties in understanding the texts, the most frequently mentioned ones being widget, tweak, boot.

On the other hand, from the group of students studying Electrical Engineering, only 9 said that that they could easily understand all the selected texts, the rest of 31 students mentioning different English-loan words, with which they were not familiar, though in some situations they could infer the meaning from the context.

4. Conclusions

As it comes out from the selection of fragments, published in two computer magazines in Romania, namely PC World and Chip Magazine, many authors choose to employ structures reproducing or imitating the ones used by specialists in the English-speaking world. Some of these have no linguistic justification, as they can easily be replaced by equivalents in Romanian, while others contribute to the conciseness and clarity of paragraphs.

It is true that people working in the IT domain or the readers computer magazines use these words as such and can easily decode information expressed by means of English-loan words. They would probably find weird exactly the use of Romanian equivalents, with which they are not so much accustomed.

As long as it does not produce linguistic ambiguity, the phenomenon may be considered perfectly acceptable. However, the suggestion of most linguists is to make use of Romanian words, which have already been introduced and used in specialized words, and avoid the unnecessary use of anglicisms.

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