THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH BORROWINGS ON THE ROMANIAN ECONOMIC LANGUAGE

Camelia CHIRILĂ[G]

Abstract: *The phenomenon of English borrowings in contemporary Romanian refers to the mixing of English and Romanian words into a seemingly hybrid and debased linguistic variety. It is a gratuitous and haphazard process which is not governed by any rules, and which has fuelled an attitude of criticism and rejection towards this area of linguistic innovation in present-day Romanian.*

This article aims at outlining the impact that the avalanche of English borrowings has had on the Romanian language. It is a true fact that the various English borrowings have invaded our language especially in the last decades. It is a massive penetration, which continues to grow at an accelerated pace, but finds motivation in the need to create new linguistic realities.

The study is based on previous scientific research in the literature of this field and on empirical research as well. I have conducted the study on a corpus extracted from the business and financial publication entitled Capital, and I have examined the elements of English origin in their evolution. I consider that due to its uninterrupted circulation and broad coverage in terms of the topics discussed, the above mentioned publication gives a reliable picture of the on-going contact between English and Romanian.

Keywords: *English borrowings, linguistic variety, Romanian language.*

The language change which results from language contact can be examined on many levels, one of which is the phenomenon of borrowing, or the use of a lexical item in language. The major influence of English on Romanian started in the second half of the 19th century, with the intensification of the cultural and economic relations between the two countries (Constantinescu, Popovici and Stefănescu, 2002), this influence being recorded in the lexicographic works of the time. Thus, Diaconovici's encyclopedic dictionary (1898- 1904) as well as other lexicographic works published around the turn of the century contain English borrowings like *baseball, cent, dolar, gallon, lady, sir, sport, tennis, tory, whig*. Hristea (1982 quoted in Constantinescu et. al. 2002) shows that the neologisms Romanian started to borrow from English in the 19th century, came almost exclusively through the intermediacy of French, many of them belonging to the sports terminology: *aut, baschet, base-ball, bowling, bridge, corner, dribbling, fault, finiş, fotbal, henţ, ofsaid, meci, outsider, polo, pressing, ring, rugby, scor, set, skeet, sportsman, start, şut, tenis, volei,* etc. Besides this intensification of relations, a minor source of influence is reported to have been the emigration of many Romanians from Transylvania and Banat to America between 1880 and the First World War, some of whom returned to their native villages.

A very important wave of English borrowings in Romanian began at the turn of the 20th century, and coincided with the intensification of economic and cultural contacts, being encouraged by Romania's industrial and economic development on West European models, many of them of British origin. Thus, English technological methods, and with them English terminologies were brought to the attention of specialists in oil drilling, mining, finance, steel production, shipbuilding, weaving, etc. To these economic elements, others were added such as military and political

[*] Constantin Brâncoveanu University, Piteşti, cameliachirila2004@yahoo.com

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circumstances- Romania's joining the Triple Entente countries in 1916 or the fact that Queen Maria, the wife of Ferdinand I, king of Romania from 1914 to 1927, was a grandchild of Queen Victoria, born in England.

Although growing in importance the English influence on Romanian was still mediated by other languages, such as French, German, Italian or Russian. Such an influence is obvious from the works of Sextil Puşcariu (*Limba română, vol 1, Privire generală*, 1940), Iorgu Iordan (*Limba română actuală. O gramatică a "greşelilor"*, 1943) and Alexandru Graur's press articles collected in the volume *Puţină gramatică* (1987, 1988).

The second half of the 20th century saw a further intensification of this influence, in spite of political, economic and cultural barriers existing between east and west Europe. The various, mainly political circumstances of the time, resulted in changing attitudes towards English. Thus, while the 1950s are thought to have been the years "most intensely marked by xenophobia", more and more English words found their way into technical terminologies and the standard language in the 1970s, when Romania began to assume an air of independence, with Russian models being increasingly discarded. This period was marked by an inflow of translations of scientific and literary writings. Constantinescu et.al. interpret this phenomenon as a form of opposition to communism. In the second half of the twentieth century, the influence of English grew steadily in spite of the purist attitude which was favoured for political reasons. One may interpret the interest in Anglo-American culture and civilization as a spontaneous form of opposition to communist indoctrination. (2002: 169).

Evidence of the increasing influence of the English language on Romanian is the recording of ever more Anglicisms in Romanian dictionaries starting with 1970. These dictionaries include works of a general nature such as *Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române* (*DEX1* and *DEX2*), dictionaries of neologisms and recordings of new words (Dimitrescu 1982, 1997: *Dicţionar de cuvinte recente- DCR1* and *DCR2*), as well as specialized dictionaries restricted to individual domains, e.g. computer science, finance and trade, marketing, sports, and medicine. Finally, the contemporary period, i.e. the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century is characterized by what is usually referred to as "an unprecedented English influence" which manifests itself directly, that is without the intermediation of other languages, mainly through second language teaching and the mass media, being supported by extra-linguistic factors such as fashion and prestige (Görlach, 2002: 171). This situation has led to a shift in attitudes towards English, some writers in the current public discourse- the written but also audio press- decrying this influence as an invasion of Anglicisms and an Anglicization of the language. The discourse about Anglicisms is based on several negative metaphors, the occurrence of English elements in Romanian being most often described as an invasion and a menace to Romanian, but also as an indecency, something low and degrading that should trigger reactions of repulsion and rejection. In this category there are numerous voices belonging to Romanian writers like Geo Dumitrescu, Octavian Paler, and Eugen Simion among others. Eugen Simion, for example, defines the obviously pejorative term 'romgleză' as "un jargon insuportabil care tinde să se împrăştie ca râia şi să prostească, să urâţească limba prin utilizarea unor termini din categoria xenismelor parazitari"(Simion, 2001, *Tot despre"romgleză"* in Curentul). Similarly, Octavian Paler ironically remarks: "Ajunşi la porţile Europei, „miticii" tranziţiei nu se mai simt bine, se pare, în limba româna folosită de „miticii" lui Caragiale, care se duceau, ca nişte bieţi provinciali, la „restaurant", la „birt", la „ospătărie", la „bodegă" sau la „local". Moda cere azi să mergem la „fast food". O firmă

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ca „La Popescu“ e de negăsit în Bucureştiul anului 2006. Ea sună prea neaoş. In schimb, *romgleza*, ca să folosesc o expresie propusă, se pare, de Eugen Simion, amestec de fandoseală şi snobism, e la mare cinste”. With all this declarative rejection of the English influence, Romanian normative linguists never went so far as to rule out the use of Anglicisms by law. For example, in the introduction to *DOOM 2005* Eugen Simion wonders: “Cât de necesară este, mai ales, această “romgleză” pe care o ascultăm - de cele mai multe ori amuzaţi, alteori iritaţi - la TV sau la Radio, vorbită cu precădere de Chiriţele mediei de azi şi ale lumii politice?... Nu este întotdeauna necesară, dar n-avem încotro, nu putem s-o interzicem”. This situation leads Constantinescu et. al. to conclude that, in spite of attitudes like those quoted above the English influence has developed largely free of any philological constraints (Görlach, 2002: 171). With regard to the various elements that have contributed to this inflow of Anglicisms, in our opinion there are two factors the strongest predictors of borrowing from English into contemporary Romanian: need and prestige. Thus, many of the words that have been borrowed in the last two decades answer specific referential and communicative needs in various compartments of the Romanian society, e.g. economy, politics, culture, entertainment, science and technology.

The dominant place that English holds in the avant-garde of scientific advancement, as well as in business and other international relations, endows it with certain connotations of modernity, fashion and prestige, which in turn promote the borrowing of words not motivated by need, the so called “luxury” or “unnecessary” loans.

At a macro-social level, the factors mentioned above combine with a third one, namely increasing levels of English/ Romanian bilingualism among younger groups of speakers. This is the product of educational programs placing a special emphasis on foreign language teaching, as well as of the specificity of the Romanian society after 1989. Bilingualism in itself cannot be separated from the classical factors of need and prestige. After all, people learn a foreign language because they need it in order to engage in personal or professional relations with other people, because they want to identify with the culture of this language, or because of both of these reasons. This specific combination of elements can be used to claim an increasing intensity of contact and cultural pressure from English onto Romanian.

At a micro-social or individual level, borrowing can be seen as a result of the role English has gained lately in many professional fields of activity. Especially in business and economics, various topics are frequently discussed in this language, and many of the individuals engaged in these fields have to be English proficient. In this context, the large number of borrowings in the studied corpus of Capital magazine should probably be seen as a consequence of this factor: journalists are particularly exposed to English as an instrument of global communication, many of the topics they report on being discussed in English as well. The problem of the nature and role of English loanwords in Romanian must also take into account the possible specific reasons that have been triggering this unprecedented influx of borrowings since 1989. Thus, it is generally agreed that borrowing American/British terms to describe various cultural realities, such as fast food, pop music, management, and outsourcing is considered a sign of internationalization of the Romanian vocabulary, while rejecting them is a manifestation of self-isolation.

In the context of the emergence and growth of English as a global language following the spread and adoption of the American culture in many countries of the world, we believe that many of the English loanwords present in Romanian today can

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be described as cultural borrowings. This means they have entered Romanian together with the concepts, things, processes they designate, presenting the advantage of brevity, international character and lack of synonyms in Romanian. This is particularly true in the economic field, where many of the concepts are borrowed from the Anglo-Saxon space.

Other factors that are promoting borrowings from English into Romanian have a social nature. The relative prestige English is endowed with, as representing a powerful culture and civilization, as well as what we think is an increasing intensity of contact between the two languages, will probably have resulted in a number of more intimate borrowings as well. To these, other causes can be added: the need to replace terms that are considered now compromised or worn out (for example *conducător*, associated with Ceauşescu), the specificity of the Romanian press after 1989 characterized by a free circulation of information, the diversity of information channels, the openness of the Romanian press towards English and American sources of information, its role as an "opinion leader". Specific linguistic causes include such factors as the intermediacy of French, compatibility with the system of the Romanian language, international character, brevity and specialization of English technical terms, or the absence of a Romanian synonym.

Methods

The main methods I have used in this article are the content analysis method of the reference sources and of the texts chosen from Capital to exemplify the case study, the comparative approach through qualitative and quantitative research, the interdisciplinary approach - mainly concentrating on economic, social and cultural aspects, and the observation method starting from empirical research in the field.

The main aim was to emphasise the need and the usefulness of English borrowings to enrich the Romanian economic language.

Case study

In what follows we are going to see how this phenomenon is affecting a particular area of the Romanian language, namely the language of business and economics. The analysis will be conducted on a corpus of words extracted from the Capital magazine (published in 2005). A particular English-Romanian contact scenario is illustrated by the use of English proper names. Names of international institutions that could have been translated and having a very specific referential function illustrate the tendency to leave English terms unexplained in Romanian, a practice which testifies to a growing intensity of contact between the two languages in question.

Such proper names are mainly built around words like *business, company, group, bank*, which are in this way brought to the attention of the Romanian public. Thus, for example the word *business* appears in over 450 proper names, *bank* is included in over 750, *consulting* in over 80, and *company* in over 20. In the sentences in which they appear, these terms are referred to by already integrated synonyms: (1) RG Holz Company, firma care aproape deţine monopolul exploatărilor forestiere din zonă, a contractat deja... (2) Se mai adresează aproximativ aceluiaşi segment, cu o prezenţă firavă, cooperativele de credit şi o singură bancă - ProCredit Bank.

In spite of the high occurrence of such words within proper names, they do not appear a lot independently, tending to remain tied to their name phrases. Thus, *bank*

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does not appear at all autonomously, *company* has no occurrence outside proper names, while *market* appears in 15 instances as a name, but only twice as a common noun. On the other hand, the occurrences of *holding* as a common noun match its frequency of use in proper nouns, i.e. over 100. This can be explained as a result of this word's longer existence in Romanian (it is recorded by DEX 1975), although we can assume it has gained more currency after '89. A similar example is *City*, used both as a proper name and as a common one: (3) Un recent raport la diviziei de statistic al Comisiei Europene arată că city-ul londonez este cea mai bogată regiune. [...]. Londra are 7,1 milioane de locuitori, din care 1,9 sunt pensionari. 43% din ei trăiesc în City şi peste jumătate dintre aceştia trăiesc în sărăcie. The importation of English names combines with a parallel tendency in the corpus to use English productively in order to name Romanian organizations, products and events. Examples of English names used for this purpose include: Cătălina Advertising (advertising agency in Bucharest), Militari Center, Moga Center (names of shopping centers in Bucharest), Carpatair (the name of an airline company headquartered in Timişoara), different shopping centers with Mall, Lotus Market (a shopping center in Oradea), Credit Bank (the name of a Romanian bank), DTH Television Grup (a TV service provider in Bucharest), Best Manager SRL (a management company in Cluj), Banu Andronache Building, etc. This tendency is also evident in the names of Romanian web-pages.

The prominent role English has gained in the language of commerce and advertising in particular, can be explained solely from the perspective of English as a prestigious language, its use making the products described seem more fashionable, modern and desirable. There are, however, cases when the exclusive naming function of a proper name is eroded, so that it departs from its initial referential frame, and is grammaticalized as a common noun. This happens by means of semantic bleaching, and can be seen in cases like Bluetooth, walkman, ePayment, Explorer, ibook, ibutton. Such a transition from proper to common nouns explains the vacillation between small and capital letters in the writing of these words, but also brings about the difficulty of drawing a very clear line between words used as names and words used with a general meaning: (4) Când îţi cumperi un telefon te interesează să aibă Bluetooth? (5) După părerea mea, ePayment este cel puţin la fel de important ca şi RAV. (6) Adevarata surpriză a venit din partea explorer-ului de la Mozilla.

Some of the most common English nouns in the studied corpus include *marketing, management, manager, leasing* as well as other words which have already been adopted in the language, being actually recorded by older dictionaries (*DEX* 1975). We have chosen to include them in the present study as we believe they have gained currency after 1989, even if they existed in Romanian before that date. However, the other words that show a very high frequency of occurrence, i.e. over 100 tokens, are used to designate new concepts, objects, activities, etc. which are new to the Romanian society, thus being prototypical examples of cultural loans.

Such recent borrowings include brand, business, supermarket, trend, retail, rating, job, bonus, ATM, futures, low-cost, outsourcing, advertiser, spot, etc. In order to obtain a more faithful image of the status these English words have in the Romanian vocabulary, we have tried to follow their evolution over several years of the same publication (Capital 1998-2005), such an approach allowing for more general conclusions regarding the fate of recent borrowings in Romanian. Several distinct situations can be abstracted from this analysis. First, there is a category of older borrowings which did not have dramatic evolutions from 1998 to 2005. This category includes words like management, manager, marketing, but also abbreviations such as

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USD, which is not very relevant as it is rarely used inside sentences. Another category is constituted by those Anglicisms that have had a spectacular evolution, some of them growing in frequency by more than ten times in eight years. Such cases of dramatic increases are going to be analysed in relation with their native equivalents, as it can be expected that the latter have been somehow affected by the abrupt entry of the corresponding English words.

One example in this respect is *business*. The frequency with which this word was used in the studied period grew dramatically, from 27 occurrences in 1998 to 321 in 2005. However, its effect on the native words *afacere*, *companie* and *firmă* are marginal and actually difficult to establish with any certainty. The numerical impact of *business* as compared to these words is very small. Thus, although on a clearly upward trend, this Anglicism is far from approaching the token frequencies of its Romanian equivalents, some of which also saw an increase during this period of time. Actually, the fall in the word *firmă*, for example, can be better explained as a result of the corresponding rise in *companie* and *afacere*, rather than as having a direct connection with *business*. This shows that what looks like a relevant evolution in a borrowed word will not necessarily have a direct or significant impact on other words of the native vocabulary. However, sometimes a borrowed word can impact directly on the number of occurrences of a native equivalent. Thus, the rise in the number of occurrences of *brand* was paralleled by a proportional fall in the tokens of *marcă*. On the basis of these evolutions, it can be predicted that brand will reach the same frequency of usage as marcă or it will even overtake it in absolute terms.

An even more representative case of the way in which a borrowed word can almost displace a native equivalent is provided by the Anglicism *retail*. In 1998, this word did not appear at all in the studied corpus, while *cu amănuntul* was used for 76 times, and *en-detail* for 7 times. All three terms had a surge in 2000, probably as a result of the arrival of large supermarket chains in Romania, and after that moment *retail* clearly gained a lot of ground in front of the two native synonyms, and it probably continued its upward trend after 2005. This firm position held by *retail*, which we believe will continue to gain ground in the future as well, is reinforced by a similar evolution in *retailer* and *detailist.*

Conclusions

The importance of the topic is closely linked to identifying the linguistic gains and losses as a result of English borrowings. The potential beneficiaries are especially students, teachers, researchers, translators, experts in the field, publishers and editors interested in the recent evolution of the Romanian economic language. Encouraging the phenomenon of borrowing of economic terms is important not only to better communicate in the business circles all over the world, but also to make the Romanian language be part of the complex linguistic globalization process.

To conclude our discussion on the impact of English borrowings extracted from the Capital magazine, it is very clear that present-day Romanian has faced a very distinct upward trend in this phenomenon. Cases such as those discussed above seem to confirm the belief that any change in the system of a language will trigger the reorganization of patterns. Thus, we agree with Georgiana Mîndreci (Mîndreci, 2008: 112) who drew attention to the fact that in all cases of borrowings, “the attentiveness to details and carefully thought choice of words” is extremely relevant for the complete integration of the new terms in the host language.

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