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ENGLISH – THE MAIN TOOL OF COMMUNICATION IN THE FUTURE?

Liliana Florina Andronache

Assist. Lecturer, PhD, "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest,

Abstract: In a world in which people tend to make things work easier and faster, language should also facilitate this process. Therefore, people worldwide have started to choose a more simple language which is taught in most schools and which most people either speak as their mother tongue or acquire as a second or foreign language. The present paper discusses and approaches different perspectives on this topic, i.e. English used everywhere on the globe in the future.

Key words: English, language, communication, worldwide, lingua franca.

Sometimes changes in a language occur naturally and some other times they are the consequence of different linguistic processes, such as the phenomenon of linguistic globalization. The current trend is for all languages to borrow as many English words and phrases as possible, which they can either translate or use as such. The purpose of such a process is to renew the vocabulary of the recipient languages, to ease and facilitate understanding and communication among peoples worldwide.

There are authors who refer to the linguistic globalization and to the rapid spread of English as an "English-induced linguistic globalization" Witalisz (2011). English has many qualities which propelled it forward and made it a desired language to use as the occasion arises. Among its characteristics, it is worth mentioning the simple grammar that English has compared to other languages - and Romance languages are a good example - , the occurrence of many short words and phrases that could easily replace a more complex and heavy phrase in another language, its distribution as a language around the world since America ranks among the most important and fierce opponents from a military, economic and political point of view.

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Its simplicity and directness have made it the choice of many non-English speaking people when it comes to both written and oral conversation. Moreover, dictionaries have proven very useful in this process of linguistic globalization through English. Many lexicographers decided that it is a good idea to register words of English origin (and not only) in the dictionaries of a specific language since it is better to prevent the bad and incorrect usage of some words of foreign origin and eventually realize that the people have borrowed and used such words on a regular basis (correctly or not, according to their level of knowledge of the language). They should also be aware and acknowledge the existence of transient words and phrases, which despite their occurrence in a language, will never be implemented permanently in the vocabulary and become part of it.

There are for sure many linguists and translators who consider that the natural phenomenon of word selection that will last in the vocabulary of a language might undergo many hardships, although it might seem easy to determine from the very beginning which are the ever-lasting words and which are the transient ones: ”Naturalmente il vocabolario accoglie solo i neologismi il cui uso è già consolidato oppure che palesemente sono destinati a durare; invece non accoglie le parole effimere o che possono risultare tali[1].”

People and peoples have always felt the need to use a unique language on an international level, irrespective of the environment and setting. This idea has also been under a constant debate in time, approached by people of all levels of knowledge. One idea that is worth mentioning belongs to Francesco Sabatini, president of the Accademia della Crusca[2]: “E chiaro che una lingua di comunicazione internazionale e necessaria, che e utile, che va imparata e che questa lingua e quasi certamente l'inglese. Ma c'è una condizione che molti di noi dimenticano: sono pochi quelli di noi che riescono a padroneggiare l'inglese come

[1] “Of course the vocabulary only engulfs those neologisms already consolidated in use or those that are clearly meant to last; in exchange, it does not receive ephemeral words or those that may turn ephemeral” (Author’s translation) - idea presented by Carmignani in an interview to Lorenzo Enriques, administrator of Zanichelli, after the publication of Zingarelli 2004.

[2] *Accademia della Crusca* is one of the most prestigious linguistic institutions in Italy and in the world, according to wikipedia.org. The fact that it strongly defends the national linguistic treasure of Italy has not been an impediment in adopting two versions for the website: one in Italian and one in English, which might force anyone to draw a simple conclusion: English might represent a danger for the vocabulary of any language after all, and it is better to live with the “enemy” than to be en-guard all the time and fight against it.

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l'italiano. Nell'uso quotidiano l'inglese sta diventando sempre piu indispensabile per le aree del sapere scientifico o del sapere organizzato ma, quando si parla di funzione creativa, e importante ricollegarsi al nostro patrimonio linguistico originario[3].” (Sabatini *apud* Rogato 2008: 27).

David Crystal (2003) – “world authority on the English language”, as he seems to be called in the *Preface* to his second edition of *English as a global language*, uses different names for English as a language in his book, e.g. “English as a global language” (p.1 and throughout the book), “(single) world language” (p. xiii), “an international language” due to the power of its people (p. 9), “the first global lingua franca” (p.1) etc.

It is also the role of the lexicographer and linguist to decrease (whenever needed) the speed of loan-word acquisition. Mioara Avram states that “Pericolul reprezentat de influenţa engleză actuală vine din faptul că ea se produce prin oameni culţi [...]. (Numeroase) cuvinte demonstrează că fără frîna lucrărilor normative şi a cunoscătorilor limbii engleze, anglicismele recente s-ar adapta la limba română uşor...[4]”

It is the case of Romanian and Italian, even if the difference between the two linguistic systems is visible with the naked eye in terms of assimilating the words of English origin. Even if Italian ranks among the most conservative languages, which prefer to borrow but not to assimilate all words of foreign origin, the initiative is a beneficial one for the speakers of Italian who can easily understand and correctly use loan-words whenever necessary in their discourse. Romanian, on the other hand, is more open and welcoming to words of English origin. There are many linguists who share the idea that languages are in a continuous process of change, formation or renewal, in which case they will for sure not become extinct and eventually die like Latin, for example.

[3] “It is clear that a language of international communication is necessary, useful and it must be learned and this language is almost certainly English. But there is a condition that most of us forget: there are very few those of us who manage to master English as they master Italian. In its daily use, English is becoming more and more indispensable in scientific fields and organized areas, but when it comes to talking about its creative function, it is important that one should reconnect to his original linguistic heritage” (Author’s translation).

[4] “The danger represented by the current English influence comes from the fact that it is done through cultivated people [...] (Numerous) words prove that without the brake of normative papers and of speakers of English, recent Anglicisms could easily adapt to Romanian.” (Author’s translation).

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In the *Foreword* to *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms*, Burchfield reiterates the idea that "languages have at various times been enriched, or at any rate have been enlarged, by the acquisition of words from other languages" (Görlach 2001: vii). Sometimes, the process might have been hardened by the reluctant attitude of the country and people towards borrowings, which has sometimes been defeated by the strength of such a phenomenon.

However, English is also a "victim", since it has also grabbed or "absorbed" words and phrases from some other languages it has come in contact with: "Over a long period and especially since the seventeenth century the English language absorbed some of the central musical terminology of the Italian language […]". "For more than a thousand years English has drawn words and phrases from many outside sources", a statement by Burchfield in the *Forward* to Görlach's *Dictionary* (Görlach 2001: vii). This makes English both a donor and a recipient language, depending from which perspective one sees it. Despite all that, it has always preserved its simplicity. It might be precisely this trait that has made it unique among other languages. All these language variations make a language be perceived as creative, in constant movement, changing with the passage of time.

There are a few works which debate the occurrence of English in different parts of the world, and the one that interests us the most for the purpose of the present paper and which is also worth mentioning is *English in Europe* by Manfred Görlach (2002). It is a comprehensive collection – as Görlach calls it - which includes (whenever possible) the work of native contributors and researchers on how and in which manner English influences their language.

English started having a massive impact on the lexis of other languages after 1990, even though there has been a highly visible influence also after World War II, as Görlach (2002: 3) states it in the *Introduction* to his book, *English in Europe*. The book also brings into light the opposition between "open" vs. purist societies. The first groups includes languages like Romanian, which are open to loan-words – some of which are also assimilated -, while the second group might refer to languages like Italian or French, more aware of their linguistic "treasure" and willing to defend it at whatever costs.

However, despite all these prejudices and hardships in deciding whether or not to borrow words of English origin, the English language is a prestigious one, being therefore taught in schools and implemented in many fields as the best instrument to be used. Nevertheless, the impact of English on different other languages might give rise to hybrids,

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i.e. words of English origin included in the vocabulary of other languages. The most famous and quoted is *Franglais*, which comes from the mixture of English and French words. The result is not much liked by the French people, attitude supported by the French authorities at a national level. It is well-known that the French are very conservative, and when it comes to language, they strongly defend their ideals and beliefs. The authorities not only suggest but also enforce the idea that the English words and phrases should be replaced by already existing French equivalents.

Italian has also accepted many words and phrases of English origin in its active and passive vocabulary, which made linguists and lexicographers, among whom it is worth mentioning Beccaria (2002), refer to this mixture between Italian and English with a simple and single word, i.e. *Itangliano, italiaricano, itanglese, italiese* (Ray 2004) sau *itenglish*[5] or with a phrase *la lingua dell' okay*.

The idea of English being taught in schools and subsequently used by almost everyone in daily discourse is also recurrent in the media. It is worth quoting the idea of Luciano De Crescenzo (1998) in one of the most prestigious newspapers in Italy, *Corriere della Serra*: "Fino a pochi anni fa essere analfabeta voleva dire non saper leggere e scrivere. Oggi, invece, per meritarsi l'epiteto, è sufficiente non conoscere l'inglese[6]".

The best example is the field of computer science (IT) and internet. Children all over the world learn English either as their mother tongue or acquire it as a second or foreign language: "It is therefore very important to establish the status of English as a school language (also in relation to other languages taught, such as French, German, or Russian) […]" (Görlach 2002: 5). In all languages there are favorite words vs. words avoided by the speaker/writer. In the same manner, there are languages that have become favorite (due to different personal or impersonal reasons) and languages that do not find themselves among the favorite ones. English is for sure part of the first category.

Music and internet are also very important when it comes to distributing English words and implementing them in the mind and vocabulary of youngsters, especially. They are the most "vulnerable" in front of the massive incoming number of English words and phrases.

[5] Schweickard (2006) *apud* Viviani (2010).

[6] "Until a few years ago, being illiterate meant not being able to read or write. Today, however, in order to be deserve such an epithet, it is enough only not to know English" (Author's translation).

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They are also animated by the desire to impress or even strike their interlocutors with the words they use. Young people are also driven by the constant need and quest for originality and expressivity, for not being like the rest, for becoming unique and easily remembered.

In more conservative cultures, like the Italian one, divergent opinions on the benefits of internet have occurred. There are voices who claim that Internet enriches the vocabulary of a language, while others who support quite the contrary. One such example is the opinion of a blogger[7] who debates on the uselessness of internet upon the Italian language: "Da un po' di tempo c'è chi sostiene che l'uso di Internet, delle chat e dei social network, insieme con quello degli SMS, stia impoverendo le lingue nazionali privandole di quelle forme di espressione più complesse e più precise al tempo stesso[8]". Many ideas do not exclude the tight relation between internet and English, which actually go hand in hand when it comes to communication worldwide. However, the Internet has turned out an effective means of improving one's knowledge of English, since most websites are written and designed in English. It is a universal method used by most advertisers and not only to be more easily understood and better perceived by the public.

Other rich and influential sources of loanwords are fields like sports, science, and economy and last but not least the artistic area (fashion, food etc.).

Despite the reluctance of some people regarding the adoption of English words and phrases in daily speech, it can be easily seen that English has a great impact in almost all fields of communication. Even though it might have been a forcible reaction at first, at the moment it seems as natural as possible, as if it were following a well defined pathway.

In conclusion, we share the same opinion with Görlach (2002: 11), i.e. "It is very likely that Anglicisms will continue to increase, not only in countries that have been retarded by political and ideological restrictions". Therefore, English has always been and will be remembered as "a tool for global communication" (Phillipson 1992, Dua 1994: *apud* Witalisz (2011). However, it is true that too much of anything might become deleterious for someone

[7] The article might be found at http://www.downloadblog.it/post/13430/internet-distruggera-la-la-lingua-italiana (consulted on 08.10.2016).

[8] "For some time now there have been people who state that the use of Internet, chat and social network, along with that of SMS is impoverishing the national languages by depriving them of the most complex and precise forms of expression at the same time." (Author's translation).

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or something, which also applies to recipient languages that engulf too many words of English origin. But, despite the "avalanche" of words in specific fields (such as fashion, cuisine, IT, media, education etc.), it is one's personal decision whether to include English words in the daily discourse or not.

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