AGAIN ABOUT ANGLICISMS IN THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE. CASE STUDY

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Abstract*: Anglicisms are accessing two language levels in contemporary Romanian: the lexical field of futile xenisms and the parlance area. And yet, irrespective of their target, there are anglicisms which are misunderstood and, therefore, are misused in Romanian.*
Keywords*: anglicism, xenism, parlance area.*

It is already known that language, as a communication system between people, is a living organism: birth, evolution and death characterize any language in human world. At the same time, language is a live, clear and accurate representation of a human community which thinks and speaks in *that* language; a population which lives in a reality, a universe reflected in the language spoken by that community. Thus, it is only natural for a language to show evolution.

Moreover, various events recorded in the history of a people leave an obvious mark on the life of the respective people and, therefore, has an intense influence over the language. Consequently, it is no surprise to ascertain that cardinal events in 1989 Romania had a distinctive impact over the Romanian language evolution, primarily on a lexical level, since – as already known – the lexical level of a language is the area mostly subject to alterations. And indeed: if on December 21, 1989, there was such a syntagm as: *societate socialistă multilateral dezvoltată* (many-sided developing socialist system), on December 25th 1989 – that is just four days later – the same linguistic unit became obsolete.

Not before long new surges of neologisms aggressively penetrated the Romanian language, altogether with diffusion of new human groups bearing new values, new virtues, new technologies, new principles and rules, a new geopolitical configuration of the World and of Europe.

And, as any new idea is ineluctably joined by the linguistic unit materialized in the lexeme for respective idea – so here comes an almost suffocating flood of new lexical entries.

Cohabitation of word stock together with English lexical units at the Romanian vocabulary level is hardly an affinity of the Romanian language – as in the fraternal relationship with the French language; it rather demonstrates a versatile feature in a linguistical profusion which is a good opportunity for Romanian speakers to fully enjoy it.

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Hybrid forms, resulting from a bizarre linguistic cross-breeding such as: a *daunloada / a şerui*, programul *uărcşopului*, *şăurumul* din Piaţa Centrală, raucously live together in the Romanian language, creeping obscurely to the literary language.

New entries do not represent either a new or an rare phenomenon. Chronologically speaking, there had already been a wave, before 1989 – indeed, a limited one (see, for instance, sports or financial & banking terminology). Geographically, this linguistical phenomenon is recorded not only in Romania, and not only in Europe. Actually it is spread worldwide. At the same time, the process is also present in opposite direction, since English itself has become host for borrowings from various languages, such as: French: *cuisine, amiable, aid*; German: *Angst, Blitz, Rucksack, Kindergarten, Vandal*; Italian: *pasta, pizza, spaghetti, opera, mafia, pianissimo, ciao*; or even from Romanian: *pastramă*. (Vătămanu, Carmen, *Prieteni falşi şi împrumuturi în limba engleză*, în *Revista Academiei Forţelor Terestre*, nr 1 / 2006, p 11.)

Languages, sometime less permissive with xenisms, are today targeted. Contemporary Russian used by youth, more than one hundred years after Leo Tolstoy's death, would replace nowadays *наблюдение* with *мониторинг*, *осуществление* with *имплементация*, *выходные* with *уик-энд*, or would use the already international *Bay!* (= Wow !). The Association of the German Language (*Verein Deutsche Sprache*) after two hundred years after Schiller's writings is worried about Anglicism invasion: *follower* for *Anhänger*; *live-stream* for *Direkt-Datenstrom*; *socializing* for *Geselligkeit*, although the German translation for *marketing* is… *das Marketing*. Not far from this area, you could hear in Voltaire's language: *Des **fans** de **foot** aux adeptes du **camping**, ou simplement ceux qui partent en **week-end** avec un bon **best-seller** à dévorer!*, while people from Dante's fatherland are flooded with phrases such as: *Partecipi al **meeting** sulle **best practices** del **digital endorsement** e del **celebrity marketing**!*

And yet, if in France there is l'équipe de terminologie et de néologie de l'Académie française watching, or in Spain there are linguists that clearly identify *una batalla lingüística entre el español y el inglés*, for the Romanian language the frail voices of the Romanian linguists hardly have a ruling role in the Romanian language evolution.

We will not appraise numerous disputes over the definition of *anglicisms*. The present research will take no notice on debates – sometimes opposing and conflicting, sometimes complementary and balancing – between scholars focused on such language issues, and neither will we ignore or minimize the importance of such debates.

According to the rules as settled by Mioara Avram (Mioara Avram, *Anglicismele în limba română actuală*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1997, pag. 11), and also by G. C. Dobridor (Gheorghe Constantin Dobridor, *Dicţionar de termeni lingvistici*, Bucureşti, Editura Teora, 1998, pag. 25), we will consider that *anglicism* is a linguistic unit (one or more words) originated in English (irrespective of the geographical point of release – be it British, American, Canadian, Australian etc.) and inserted into the Romanian language either in the parlance area – as a unit of special terminology, without a Romanian equivalent for the denominated notion, or in the argotic speech (slang) – as a futile xenism, in other words as a lexical unit that superfluously duplicates an already existing word in the Romanian language.

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At this point, several questions arise in our issue: why do anglicisms spread throughout the Romanian language? Are these English-provided words really needed? Is this linguistic happening dangerous for the Romanian language, or is it a natural tendency in a language evolution?

In our opinion, the answer lies right in the lines above: we have already explained that anglicisms can be found both in the parlance area and in the argotic speech (slang). Thus, for the parlance area, the answer is YES; such units are indeed needed. For the argotic speech (slang), the answer is NO. They are not needed. In other words, there are no reasons to worry about new English entries in the parlance area; removing such units is not recommended, and this – for various reasons, either practical or ethno-linguistical ones. On the other hand, the same context shows obviously and undoubtedly that futile xenisms are not entitled to a legitimate presence – except maybe for the subculture level.

Yet, the gain of using anglicisms in the Romanian language comes into sight in both areas – parlance and argotic. Communication internationalization plus shorter time for expressing the unit in the two areas will always be sound reasons for users. The loss aims at the argot: anglicism usage leads, at the lexical language level, to proliferation of futile xenisms, while at the paradigmatic level it shifts the synthetic character of the Romanian language towards analytism in the linguistic typology.

The permeation channelling of the linguistic flood was primarily the entire various collection of media technologies (including radio, television, printed press, internet etc.) meant to inform and influence public opinion – that is mass media. As a strong cultural and educational agent, its influence is crucial. Persons becoming over night experts in communication or characterized by mediocrity rather than moderation, sometimes even translators or teachers, or just common individuals unable to tell right from wrong, but willing to be trendy – are the main elements carrying anglicisms.

The most representative target of this linguistical contamination is the youth, which would become an important vector – as, it is known, youth is the social segment that gets into contact and accepts new technological gadgets most rapidly.

On a macrosocial scale, the result of anglicism dissemination in the Romanian language is represented by a misunderstood and misachieved interculturality, with possible results in wasting a precious legacy: the Romanian language.

In this context, we tested a group of students from science faculties (first and second academic year), English learners (two academic hours per week), with a various English language background.

A set of 17 statements in English was brought forward; each statement has 1-2 English words, used also in the Romanian language (some of them having similar form with the English word, but a different meaning – so assimilable to *false friends*) such as:

Accomodation *is not very expensive in this town*.

Cazarea *nu e foarte scumpă în acest oraş*.

Other words were taken over as they were, without any Romanian translation:

Today we have a ***workshop*** *in* ***handmade***.

Azi avem un ***workshop*** *de* ***handmade.***

No name/ surname was required from respondents, and neither academic branch (specialization). Still, the folowing data and information were required: the current

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academic year of studies of each student (freshmen or sophomore), age, whether holders of competence certificate in English (Cambridge, IELTS etc.) and how many years they had been studying English. At the first academic year, most respondents were aged 19-20, two: 23-25, three: over 30. At the second academic year: 20-24.

The test was displayed in two columns: the left column – for the English text, the right column – for the Romanian translation. The linguistic units under our atttention were not highlighted, so that respondents could feel no influence over answers. In other respects students were asked to translate as natural and usual into Romanian.

The selection for the 20 units was made out of a larger vocabulary; the main criterion was the rate of occurence for the lingusitic units as used by the student sample. It is worth mentioning that several tested units were included and, consequently admitted with the new meaning in Romanian dictionaries such as *The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, Dictionary of Orthographic, Orthoepic and Morphologic Rules of the Romanian Language*, Florin Marcu's *Dictionary of Neologisms* (X-th edition) or any other similar works that could be taken into account.

Test timing was 30 minutes.

Here is the entire quiz; the queried linguistic units are here highlighted only for the purpose of this work (not in the test required from respondents):

1. She is a very ***determined*** person.
2. Let us ***focus*** on the problem.
3. Today we have a ***workshop*** in handmade.
4. He has a good ***expertise*** in ***make up***.
5. The problem of inflation has reached epic proportions.
6. Grannie is very old and needs our ***support***.
7. I generally have ***toast*** and cheese for breakfast.
8. Mary made a ***pathetic*** attempt to apologise.
9. He is the best ***chef*** in town.
10. This is a good ***opportunity*** to meet him.
11. Mamaia is a very trendy ***resort*** in Romania.
12. He ***applied*** for a new ***job***.
13. ***Accomodation*** is not very expensive in this town.
14. The ***audience*** applauded the ***performance*** of the artist.
16. This is the ***trend*** in the Romanian ***fashion***.
17. This represents the ***interaction*** between the two forces.

There were 100 respondents; most of them answered all questions.

Having analyzed the translation, we found as follows:

- Words such as ***determined, pathetic, opportunity, apply*** și ***accomodation*** were mistakenly rendered in over 80 per cent as *determinat, patetic, oportunitate, aplica* and *acomodare*, that is Romanian words with a totally different meaning. It is worth mentioning that the three respondents over 30 chose the correct translation for *determined* – that is: *hotărât*.
- In an opposite position was the word ***chef*** which, in 90 per cent was translated into Romanian as *bucătar* or *bucătar șef* (cook); few variants were *șef* (in Romanian: boss) or *chef* (in Romanian: feast / desire / whim). There is indeed the word *chef* in English,

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but it is an entry from French. The variant *chef* came into the Romanian language from English, and not from French and this – especially due to the last 20-year TV shows.

- The word ***audience*** was again mistakenly translated using the alike Romanian *audienţă* (official appointment) by 51 per cent of respondents, while 48 per cent chose the correct variant: *public* or *spectatori*, 1 per cent indicated a totally incorect translation.
- The verb ***to focus*** was correctly rendered into Romanian by 69 per cent of respondents, while 23 per cent selected the incorrect *a focusa*, (a word which does not even exist in the Romanian language and, consequently, it is not included in the above mentioned Romanian dictionaries); 8 per cent of answers were inaccurate.
- The noun ***workshop***: 46 per cent – appropriate translation: *atelier*, 19 per cent preserved the English *workshop***;** 23 per cent – inappropriate variants; 12 per cent – no answer. We must mention that the word *handmade*, included in the quiz, but not taken into account in the study, was rendered into Romanian with the same form *handmade* in only two cases; most respondents preferred the correct translation *lucru manual / lucru de mână.*
- The lexeme ***make up***: 60 per cent – correct answers (*machiaj*); 33 per cent – noted *make up*; 5 per cent – other inappropriate variants; 2 per cent – no answer.
- The evolution of the lexeme ***epic*** in the Romanian language as a translation for the English ***epic*** is quite worth mentioning. Our analysis shows that the English lexeme is mistakenly rendered into Romanian: 41 per cent of respondents chose this wrong variant, while 42 per cent selected the right variant; 10 per cent provided no answer; 7 per cent – other inappropriate variants.
- The word ***support*** was correctly translated by 75 per cent of respondents as *sprijin*, while 25 per incorrectly translated it as *suport*.
- The word ***toast***: 68 per cent translated correctly *pâine prăjită*; 12 per cent provided *toast* or *pâine toast* (as often displayed on packages of this food product on the Romanian markets); 13 per cent provided no answer; 7 per cent – other inappropriate variants, such as: *discurs* or *toast* (= raising of glasses to honor somebody) – three respondents, while four translated it as *sandviş*.
- The word ***resort***: 68 per cent translated correctly *staţiune*; 20 per cent translated as *resort* (quite often used in the Romanian language lately); 3 per cent provided no answer; 9 per cent – other inappropriate variants (*restaurant, rezervaţie, plajă* etc.)
- The word ***job***: 65 per cent translated *slujbă* or *loc de muncă*; 35 per cent chose *job*.
- The word ***performance***: 27 per cent translated correctly *interpretare* or *prestaţie*; 70 per cent translated *performanţă*; 2 per cent provided no answer; 1 per cent – some other inappropriate variant.
- The word ***trend***: 29 per cent translated correctly *tendinţă*, *curent* or *stil*; 67 per cent rendered *trend*; 4 per cent provided no answer.
- The word ***fashion***: 77 per cent translated correctly *modă*; 9 per cent rendered it as *fashion*; 11 per cent provided no answer; 3 per cent – other inappropriate variants.
- The word ***interaction***: 63 per cent translated correctly *interacţiune*; 30 per cent rendered incorrectly *interacţie* (a word that actually does not exist in the Romamian language) ; 3 per cent provided no answer; 4 per cent – other inappropriate variants.

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We must also remark that several anglicisms among the above mentioned (such as: *trend, to focus, job, workshop*) were used with the Romanian paradigmatic features: *trendul* (enclitic definite article), *un job*, *un workshop* (proclitic indefinite article) or verbal conjugation such as present subjunctive (conjunctiv prezent): *să ne focusăm*.

Four respondents were certificated in language competence; nevertheless this had no relevance in providing a correct answer – which was quite normal, as in a language proficiency certification there is never a translation examination (hardly the skill of passing from Language 1 to Language 2 and the other way round is ever tested).

As already mentioned in the opening lines (see *supra*, p.2), cohabitation of English entries with Romanian word stock represents a plain validation of the Romanian language versatility. Far from being framed by a creative bilingualism – which might be fairly understood if we mentioned authors of Romanian-French or French-Romanian literatures – this phenomenon does not necessarily stand for an affinity of the Romanian language in the way it turned out in the fraternal relationship with French.

In some certain situations interaction between English and other target languages led to *pidgin* (that is the birth of a new simplified language made up of parts of two or more languages, used as a communication tool between speakers whose native languages are different; the newborn language has elements from both involved languages) (*Encarta Dictionaries*, Encarta, Microsoft® Encarta® 2009.©1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation); Gheorghe Constantin Dobridor, *Dicţionar de termeni lingvistici*, Bucureşti, Editura Teora, 1998, pag. 245). At present, scholars are likely to mention the incidence of linguistic phenomena, such as: Franglo (Franglais / Frenglish), (French + English, spoken in Dover – Calais area), Tinglish (Thai + English) or Chinglish (Chinese + English). As a matter of fact, the same thing happened when geographical variants of English occurred: British English, American English, Canadian English, Australian English, New-Zealand English, South African English, Arabian English, Pakistani English, Indian, English, etc. – what actually confers the feature of a pluricentric language on English.

Can we speak nowadays in the same way about the existence of Romglish? Hardly. And this – because (as already known), beyond the communication role of the language, an important feature is *delineation*, which makes the difference either at a social level, or a professional, or social-cell level. As for the Romanian language, as long as this lexical compound mixture activates as a communication means – it will exist. The very moment this role is diminished, the language will pass over a new threshold towards a new stage of its life.

It is incumbent on English teachers to supervise the linguistical relations between English and Romanian, especially under the circumstances of mass-media disservice as to education. As teachers of English observing for years this phenomenon out of control, we have tried to clarify to our students the right meaning of an anglicism; we have tried to explain that there are cases when such words must exist in Romanian, and there are cases when they are not needed. All this – with deep respect towards both English and Romanian language, culture and civilization.

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