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# New Worlds, New Words : On Language Change and Word Formation in Internet English and Romanian

Abstract*: Technology and the English language have crossed paths over the past thirty years, in particular the internet as the latest IT development being the site of unprecedented language play and creativity. Amid a high-tech revolution, new linguistic varieties are born of parents of modern technology, Romanian making no exception. In this paper we explore the effects of a novel theoretical word formation model which draws on basic principles of cross-linguistic denomination that may contribute to the (re)formation of the mainstream lexis in the context of a highly technologically-influenced semiotic situation. In focus are lexical coinages, blending, lexical and semantic calques, prefixes, suffixes and other compounds.*

Key words*: internet linguistic variety, internet lexicography, cross-linguistic model, word formation, meaning extension, blending, lexical/semantic calques, internet prefixes, internet suffixes*

*There are many good moccasin tracks along the trail of a straight arrow*.
(Native American proverb, Sioux)

Technology has exercised an inevitable, sometimes silent, sometimes boisterous influence on all aspects of human civilization over the past thirty years at so fast a pace that no one would argue against its mastery on language use in the first place, by constant and sustainable intervention. The role of English in such technologically-based practices is indubitable in so far as the internet foremost of all other modern technologies makes large quantities of English available to language users worldwide, contributing to its global use. Such unprecedented technological intervention could not have been effacing or short-lived in relation to language, in particular at the level of word formation.

The lexicon of a language represents the common reservoir of the technologically-related language changes that are herein depicted as predominant and most conspicuous. Unique, original, short and meaningful words and phrases are the immediate result of this cultural

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cross-linguistic intersection, which altogether calls for a re-evaluation of the word formation process itself within a new semiotic situation.

Through the process of coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, conversions, acronyms, derivation, suffixation, prefixes and infixes, contemporary use of language has never been more creative or resourceful. For the latest millennial decades, new lexical units have percolated through mainstream lexicography and forced their linguistic entrance into prestigious dictionaries, leaving behind an underground urban online popularity.

A new theoretical word formation model has thus emerged which we shall call the adopt-adapt Model or AA Model1: drawing on computer terminology, an extensive and still extending set of lexical units has been adopted mostly by the young or young-minded internet users to meet new electronic criteria for communication and consequently adapted for use in non-internet settings under the safe umbrella of slang in colloquial speech (Crystal 2006: 71). To provide evidence for the AA model, we shall explore the most productive types of word formation in internet language use, on a cross-linguistic route, from adopting/adapting of computer-savvy lexical items in English to adapting (adopting) of corresponding terms in a lesser-used language such as Romanian. What is linguistically challenging is the re-interpretation of the AA Model in Romanian in a reversed fashion, as stated above, from adapting to adopting, in the context of the diachronic development of the word formation process in Romanian and its interdependent relationship with English. In addition, the reversed orientation from adaptation or accommodation to adoption is facilitated by the speed of the morphological adaptation in general in the Romanian language with specific morpho-syntactic criteria that must be met before actual use.

Instrumental in our approach are the principles of cross-linguistic denomination which are highly influenced by a gamut of historical and cultural factors. In the literature, four categories outline the model of cross-linguistic denomination (Malt et al. 2003):

a) names that happened to exist in that language at some earlier time and so were available for extending to new objects;
b) objects that happened to exist in the culture at some earlier time and either formed a similarity cluster that was given a name, or extended outward from a cluster and caused a name to be extended to less similar objects by chaining (Lakoff, 1987; Taylor, 1995);
c) names that happened to be bestowed on objects by a manufacturer either from within that culture or from outside for marketing purposes;
d) domains that were of particular interest to a culture at some point in its history and so required finer linguistic differentiation of the conceptual space.

The first category of the AA Model is the class of new lexical units that represent technologically-related lexical extensions in so much as words which stand for familiar objects and actions have developed additional meanings within the specialised technical vocabulary of the computer users. Most terms are associated with the software that allows access not only to the internet but also to originally document editing. Their presence on the screen is part and parcel of our electronic routine today. It is manifest permanently with the

[1] Adopt with the meaning choose, take something by choice, select; Adapt with the meaning make fit for use, accommodate.



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option of the hidden menu, as labels used to designate screen areas and functions as well as sporadically, circumstantially-occurring such as error messages that pop up upon failure operations (forbidden, illegal operation, error, not found, 404 error, "a page or site is no longer in service").

Our research interest in the set of functional computer terms is focussed on a cross-linguistic comparison of an abridged version of the most important lexical units for basic commands in Microsoft Office Word software (in English with their Romanian translations) to a selection of such common terms as reinterpreted by Romanian internet users (hence from English into Romanian) within an attempt to cuddle them into common vocabulary usage.

The source for the former dataset was the official site of Microsoft that allows download of additional features such as translations for the command bars that appear on Microsoft Office 2000 menus and toolbars. The Microsoft Office Command Translator assists users of any version of Office where the user interface is not in their native language and provides translations for over 4300 command bars in twenty-nine languages. The source for the latter dataset is a discussion group – Microsoft Terminology Community Forum[2] – whereby non-native internet users are invited to contribute with their own translations for computer routine terms they use in their native language and whose translation, in our case from English into Romanian, might be revisable and consequently more fit for adoption in common vocabulary as well.

The cross-linguistic analysis outlines a reversed AA model which draws on peremptory evidence in common language use. As argued above, meaning extensions in English, whereby computer terminology originated in the first place, follow the conventional path from adopting to adapting, viz. names were bestowed on objects or actions in relation to their linguistic existence prior to meaning extension. All these terms that may classified using the buzzword *computerspeak*, which we can associate with both the computer software terminology (*browse, cancel, clear, copy, delete, find, exit, go, paste, save, search, view*) as well as the computer hardware terminology (*block, bomb, crash, freeze, hang, lock, client*) - are mostly familiar words that we use everyday and consequently, the software producer could not have missed the opportunity to speculate their visibility for marketing purposes or simply to facilitate new technology implementation in human routine.

In Romanian, the original translations (see Table 1) represent an adaptation or accommodation of computer terms from the source language into the target language: in the context of overlapping classes, the verb-noun homonymy in English generates ambiguity in translation: basic commands such as *cancel, check, clear, go, open, refresh, select* etc. which favour verbal use over noun use in English – are rendered in a reversed fashion in Romanian

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[2] Extracted from the list available on Microsoft Terminology Community Forum, where definitions in English are also enlisted for each and every glossary entry. This forum provides the opportunity to give feedback on Microsoft terminology that will be used in the Windows Live (Romanian) language version of Microsoft products. Contributions were expected to arrive for the latest update which was due on May, 31, 2008. Following this deadline, reviewing, selection and locking of terms were performed. From 300 suggestions that were made by contributors to this forum, a final list of 46 terms were eventually locked. Retrieved June 24, 2008, < http://members.microsoft.com/wincg/en-us/mtcf_glossary.aspx?s=2&langid=1221 >.



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whereby noun translation is preferred, e.g. *revocare, verificare, golire, salt, deschidere, reîmprospătare, selectare*. Once adapted for use in Romanian, English loans were ready for selection and re-evaluation as illustrated by the small yet consistent range of examples extracted from the discussion group. Noun use is overruled in most cases for basic commands, e.g. current translation of Ro. *apariție offline* (which stands for En. *appear offline*) overruled by a new translation of Ro. *arată-mă neconectat* (see Table 2).

In spite of all gloomy predictions of language purists, the English influence on Romanian vocabulary proves once again beneficial and resourceful in the sense that new lexical items that were initially adapted for Romanian from English and entered as raw, boorish forms were gradually adopted and selected for common use, first and foremost through the written medium of the new technology (out of an overflow of English loans, take for instance a couple: En.*check* - from the merely adapted Ro. *selecta* to the user-friendly, adopted Ro. *bifa*; En. *give us feedback* - from the merely adapted Ro. *furnizați-ne feedback* to the user-friendly, adopted Ro. *spuneți-vă părerea*).

A special set of functional computer-related terms designate the pool of users that populate the internet. These lexical units have also undergone meaning extension within the process of technologically-enhanced language revitalisation. For the cross-linguistic analysis, such terms are abounding in the word formation process by their constituency as lexical and semantic calques[3], which we shall mark as (LC) and (SC). Common linguistic blending will thus result in a considerable number of portmanteau words[4], which we shall mark as (PM).

Among the most common terms that have already entered everyday internet usage we may include the following: En. *internaut*; Ro. *internaut* (PM in English < internet + austranaut/cybernaut and LC in Romanian); En. *netizen*; Ro. *netățean* (PM in English < internet + citizen; LC in Romanian); En. *cybercitizen* (new compound word in English, used interchangeably as such or in two separated words, e.g. *cyber citizen*, or hyphenated, e.g. *cyber-citizen*); Ro. *cyber cetățean* (LC in Romanian)- also used in Romanian translation *cetățean virtual* or cetățean al Web-ului; En. *netter* (new word with most productive agent noun-forming suffix *–er* in English, on the pattern of worker, builder, manager, teacher, rescuer etc.).

The case of *netter* in internet homonymic use in Romanian calls for disambiguation: Ro. *netter* has been used metonymically in recent medicine-related internet contexts, with the metonymic pattern- the author for the book (see Netter, Frank.H. Atlas of Human Anatomy. București: Callisto, 2005) and used interchangeably lower case or upper case, but mostly lower case, hyphenated with the definite article (*De la 180...ca nu se mai gaseste...si eu am nevoie mare de Netter* 🙂*sau daca nu asa facem schimb eu dau mcminnn si niste bani si tu mi dai netter...hm nimeni nu si da netterul..dar mai stii; uitasem! in legatura cu netter-ul: sunt mai multe volume cumva sau e doar unu in mai multe limbi? sai pe care sa il iau? cel in romana e bun?; Singura chestie nasoală e ca trebuie sa cari "Netterul"; Daca vrei atlas de*

[3] Loans generate lexical calques, which represent new lexical items borrowed from another language, and semantic calques, which refer to meaning extensions of already existent terms. Also in Hristea (1997: 10-30).

[4] In morphological analysis referring to cases where a single morph can be analysed into more than one morpheme; when equivalent to a word, portmanteau word (Crystal, 2003: 360).



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*anatomie, ia-ti Netter-ul pe care il gasesti si prin retea daca nu mai ai bani sa-l cumperi; intr- adevar netterul era "baza", mai incoace ( adica acum vreo 3 ani cred) aveau si niste manechine/mulaje din plastic cu care se "jucau". cel putin asta mi-a zis bubu....*).

Also in internet use are the following: En. *(cyber)surfer* (new compound word in English); Ro. surfer (LC); En./ Ro. *digiterati* (PM< digital + literati = LC< Latin *literatus*) or En. *digerati* (PM< digital + illuminati + LC< Latin *illuminate*); other English-only terms: *netty, nethead, nerd, bozo, newbie, wizard, luser* ["users who are losers"], *wannabees* ["aspiring hackers who cannot hack"][5].

Remarkable is also the development of an extensive and extending family of words from the recently-recorded Romanian internet (DOOM 2005) with *internaut* (also recorded DOOM 2005) alongside with new, unexpected derivates in recurrent collocations such as *internautic,-ă*, adj. *aventură internautică, discuție internautică, discriminare internautică, proză internautică, jurnal internautic, activități internautice;* also noun-conversed to *internautică* in *bolnavi de internautică, internautica de vârsta a doua, internautica şi htmlism*; *internautist , -ă,* adj. *forum internautist; cultura internautista*; *internetic, -că,* adj. *piraţi internetici, bucătari internetici, copii internetici, jurnalişti clasici sau internetici*; *internetist,-ă,* n./adj., *rugă de internetist, internetistă înrăită, popor internetist, tineretul internetist, educație internetistă, plăcere internetistă*; *internetism*, n., in *civilizația europeană a căzut in internetism* (*Dilema veche online* 23 February 2008: V,210); even in verb form as an individual coinage in *interneta*, vb., *mă internetez de la job, sa internetesc pe laptop*; *interneteşte,* adv. on the pattern of mostly colloq. Ro. *englezeşte, franţuzeşte, nemţeşte* in *cum se cuvine pe interneteşte.*

A special case is represented by the most recently designated internet practice- blogging (> blog >Weblog). The original Weblog[6] became and spread as blog, a form imposed by usage and first suggested by Peter Merholz, an internaut himself. The form can be easily traced back to the original form "weblog" and therefore prevailing as a presupposed abridged form. The observation that one individual user decided to impose a new spelling in "wee – blog" and consequently the emerged form blog offers strong evidence in favour of an internet coinage, rather than an abridged form.

Blog was crowned Word of the Year by Merriam-Webster dictionary publishers in 2004 to have been already included in 2005 version of Merriam Webster's print edition.

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[5] Upon a routine key word search (*netter, netter-ul, netterul*) using Google search engine, a consistent number of examples popped up, from which the most frequent were extracted from various internet genres, mostly discussion groups and blogs.

[6] In 1997 Jørn Barger, an American online legend and a pioneer of the blogosphere, coined the term *Weblog*, a classic example of a portmanteau word, blending "Web" and "log", to describe the process of logging his online discoveries as he was making them- the Robot Wisdom Weblog. P. Boutin, "Robot Wisdom in the Street", Wired, Issue 13.07: August 2007. <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.07/posts.html?pg=6> In early 1999, Peter Merholz announced that he was going to start pronouncing *weblog* wee-blog as well as to refer to those who employ the new form of e-writing as "bloggers". Blood, 2002. "Weblogs: A History and Perspective" in Rodzvilla, J. (2002).



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> BLOG noun [short for Weblog] (1999): a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer.

Prior to 2004 Merriam Webster award, in March 2003, the Oxford English Dictionary was the first to add *Weblog* (both noun and verb) as well as *blog* to its corpus[7].

> Weblog: a frequently update Website consisting of personal observations, excerpts from other sources, etc. typically run by a single person, and usually with hyperlinks to other sites; an online journal or diary. Blogs […] contain daily musings about news, dating, marriage, divorce, children, politics in the Middle East […] or millions of other things or nothing at all. To blog is to be part of a community of smart, tech-savvy people who want to be on the forefront of a new literary undertaking. To write or maintain a Weblog. To read or browse through Weblogs, especially habitually.

The term is the most popular portmanteau word of both English and Romanian[8] internet linguistic varieties, as a result of blending Web (in English, a neologism, usually upper case in the internet sense first attested in 1994) and log (in English, a word of uncertain etymology[9], neologism as a phrasal verb – log in, log out- , in the computing sense first attested in 1963, drawing on the older meaning "to enter into a log book, viz. daily record of a ship's speed or progress").

In Romanian, the term *blog* with the richest family of new words in noun form *blogger* (with the flexional affix structure /Ø/~ /i/~ /lui/~ /lor/) but also in verb form *bloga* (with the morphematic structure for the present tense: /a/~ /ă/~ /ez/~ /eaz/) - was calqued on the shortened English term *blog*. The Romanian *blo*g is in current use with vowel alternatives, gender-marked for neuter /i/~ /e/ - *bloguri/bloage*- the latter still on the way to efface its originally ironic and derogative use and possibly to complete assimilation, although the preference for the former in use is peremptory for academic content. Such loan translations have been already adapted to Romanian morphological criteria but also to Romanian graphical constraints (hence the use of diacritics). Plain Romanian words, viz. phonemic orthography of the English words, have thus occurred and are in increasing use concurrently with the English-calqued forms.

When languages collide, the thin line between language play and language creativity is virtually inexistent but discernable in cross-linguistic word formation processes such as in the case of the prolific blog-family of words. It becomes problematic to distinguish between mere lexical calquing and suffixing in the construction of the English *bloggist* and the

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[7] August 2007:<http://www.plasticbag.org/archives/2003/08/the_oeds_draft_definition_of_a_Weblog/>.

[8] Rodica Zafiu , "Păcatele limbii. Blog", *România literară* (9) 9 March 2007.

[9] On phonological ground, etymologists reject its calquing after the Norwegian *lag*, viz. a fallen tree, and suggest onomatopoeic origin. In D. Harper, Online Etymology Dictionary (2001). 27 June 2008 <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=log>. Important sources for this free online compilation can be found here: <http://www.etymonline.com/sources.php>.



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contaminated Romanian *bloggist* or the fully-fledged Romanian *bloghist*, also gender-marked in *blogistă* or *blogghistă*. In English, *bloggis*t is a portmanteau word, which resulted from blending *blog* (web + log) and *artist*. It seems more likely that the Romanian *bloggist/blo*gghist were a lexical calque after the English *bloggist*, rather than a suffix construction with the Romanian agent noun forming *-ist*[10]. The strongest argument is the novelty of the lexical unit itself – blog – that has not been officially acknowledged by any Romanian dictionary with the remarkable exception of the numerous online urban dictionaries. The same holds true for the English *blogosphere* and *blogorrhoea*, as portmanteau words which were built on a blending between *blog* and *biosphere*, *blog* and *logorrhoea* respectively; also in favour of lexical calques Ro. *blogosferă, blogoree*.

The plethora of other lexical units that have emerged in Romanian recently adds to the ambiguous nature of such lexical constructs as for instance the redundant suffix *-ist* linked to the already existing agent noun suffix *-er* in *bloggerist*; the noun-forming suffix *-(an)g*iu with pejorative connotation in *blogangiu*; -ism in *bloghism* or *blogism, bloggerism*; popular plain Romanian suffixes in blogărime, blogăreală, blogărie, blogologie*;* other diminutive suffix-forming nouns in *bloguț, bloguşor, blogărel;* adjective-forming suffixes in *blogheristic, blogistic* as well as in standard verb adaptation *a bloga* but also *a blogări*.

Also lurking for mainstream linguistic recognition, yet not as successful and resourceful as its millennial lexical peer, *blog* – the word *google* is an internet English coinage with a legendary etymological past. According to the Google Company's official position[11], the name is "a play on the word *googol*, which was coined by Milton Sirotta, nephew of American mathematician Edward Kasner, and was popularized in the book, *Mathematics and the Imagination* by Kasner and James Newman". The Oxford English Dictionary acknowledged the word *google* in verb form in 2006 [12], both intransitive and transitive: intr. To use the Google search engine to find information on the internet. trans. To search for information about (a person or thing) using the Google search engine. The verb *google* was recorded lowercase, albeit its retained capitalization in noun form to refer to its etymology "*Google*, trademark for a search engine".

The metonymic use of *google* (product for producer) might be flattering for any successful business insofar as the company's name becomes synonymous with the company's innovatory product, though impeding the trademark. Another authoritative source on the English language, Merriam Webster's definition of *google* with its inflected forms *googled* and *googling* also does justice in the meaning explanation it provides specifically about a Google search, not about a search using any search engine on the internet: "to use the Google

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[10] To my knowledge, few Romanian linguists took interest in the new electronic language explosion. Rodica Zafiu concentrated on the suffix formation and the array of lexical units resulting from the adaptation of the English *blog* in the Romanian language. "Păcatele limbii. Bloguire", *România literară (*10)16 March 2007.

[11] It refers to the number represented by the numeral 1 followed by 100 zeros. Google's use of the term reflects the company's mission to organize the immense, seemingly infinite amount of information available on the web. "Google Milestones". *Google.com.*15 July 2008: < http://www.google.com/corporate/history.html >.

[12] *Quarterly Updates to OED Online*. 15 June 2006. 15 July 2008: < http://www.oed.com/help/updates/pimesic-pleating.html#oos>.



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search engine to obtain information about (as a person) on the World Wide Web"[13]. Both authoritative dictionaries on the English language reported first known usage of the word in 2001. In 2006, the word *google* was voted the Most Useful Word, confirming supremacy both in usage and prestige of another electronic coinage - blog [*sic*] - in its final position as a runner-up in Merriam Webster's Top Ten Words of the Year Competition, which is based on votes from visitors to the website[14].

How *google* came into being, albeit the romanticised view on the history of language and therefore the frowning folds on the hard-core linguists' foreheads, is illuminating and revealing not only for the etymologist but also for the internet language researcher in relation to the underlying principles of language play and creativity. This is in fact how the internet linguistic variety itself came into being: melting tradition, technology and ludism in one electronic pot.

We may thus find out that the name of the search engine and software company Google originates in a deliberate misspelling of the word "Googol" which refers to $10^{100}$ (the number represented by a one followed by one hundred zeros). American mathematician Edward Kasner, who invented the number, had no idea how to call such a big number and he simply asked his nephew, nine-year-old Milton Sirotta, to come up with a word for an extremely large number. Sirotta suggested *googol* and also *googolplex* for an even bigger number. More than fifty years later, the word reentered usage in slightly modified clothes.

It all began with a research project in January 1996 by Larry Page and Sergey Brin, two Ph.D. students at Stanford University, California. They hypothesised that a search engine that analysed the relationships between websites would produce better results than existing techniques that ranked results according to how many times the search term appeared on a page. And this is how "Google" came into being: In 1996, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, the company's founders, called their initial search engine "BackRub", named for its analysis of the of the web's "back links". Larry Page shared his office room with several other graduate students, including Sean Anderson, Tamara Munzner, and Lucas Pereira.

In 1997, Larry and his officemates discussed a number of possible new names for the rapidly improving search technology. Sean Anderson recalls the final brainstorming session as occurring one day during September of that year. Sean and Larry were in their office, using the whiteboard, trying to think up a good name - something that related to the indexing of an immense amount of data. Sean verbally suggested the word *googolplex*, and Larry responded verbally with the shortened form, *googol*. Sean executed a search of the internet domain name registry database to see if the newly suggested name was still available for registration and use. Sean was not an infallible speller, and he made the mistake of searching for the name spelled as *google.com*, which he found to be available. Larry liked the name, and within hours he took the step of registering the name *google.com* for himself and Sergey:

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[13] 15 July 2008: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/google >.

[14] "Merriam- Webster's Words of the Year 2006". 15 July 2008: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/info/06words.htm >.



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the domain name registration record dates from September 1997 and one year later the company was incorporated as *Google Inc.* at a friend's garage in Menlo Park, California.[15]

Between the most recent and most frequently used adapted verb form Ro. *a gugla* in *GUGLA (cu accent pe* A*), guglez, vb. I. 1. Tranz. A efectua o cautare folosind motorul de cautare google. - Web. google*[16], which circulates in phonemic orthography in Romanian, and variants in use such as Ro. *a gugăli*, mostly as Ro. *a gugali*, with no diacritics due to their absence in most internet texts in Romanian, but with a promising comeback in the latest electronic genre, viz. blogs, in *as gugali pana mi-ar sari ochii*[17] , sometimes with a special status as a foreign coinage, hence the orthography with inverted commas *ma enerveaza 'a gugali'*[18], or Ro. *a googla* in *a googla ceva inseamna ca acel ceva te intereseaza*[19] - the calqued forms after the English *google* are being used interchangeably in current internet Romanian. A special reference is to be made to highlight the unexpected upsurge of the plain phonemic orthography in recent electronic usage, hence the preference for the form Ro. *a gugla* with its full inflection pattern[20]. Also evidence is found for the frequent use of a popular suffix formation in Romanian with the abstract suffix *-eală*, *gugăleală*, in *la o gugaleala rapida, am gasit pe wikipedia*[21].

The class of compound words represents the most resourceful category of internet neologisms both in English and in Romanian. Two already dictionary- (but most significantly) usage-acknowledged lexical units are joined together into a new word in the name of virtual utilitarism, which theorizes linguistic behaviour on the internet in the extended fashion of the nineteenth century ethical dilemma. In general, on the internet just as elsewhere, people choose that which provides greatest value (usefulness, happiness, utility). Within the cyberculture, greatest value is placed on communication efficiency whereby the interest of the community prevails. In the space- and time-bound internet language situations, the fundamental principle of "less is more" is at work: lexical concentration is thus heavy and first and foremost dependent on compounding in its twofold manifestation by prefix and suffix formation.

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[15] "Whole Lotta Something". *The Word Detective*. 15 January 2002. 15 July 2008: <http://www.word-detective.com/011502.html>.

[16] "A gugla (unii i-ar putea spune 'a gugla')". *Ganduri.* 9 August 2007. 15 July 2008: <http://avenir.ro/ganduri/?p=20>.

[17] „Cum să îți alegi un credit bun". *Softpedia Forum.* 19 October 2006. 15 July 2008: <http://forum.softpedia.com/lofiversion/index.php/t172389.html >.

[18] "Nu ne plac unele cuvinte". *Cafeneaua.com.* 26 April 2007. 15 July 2008: <http://www.pixelflow.ro/forum/viewtopic.php?p=14153&highlight=&sid=8f656a59cf9a9804f420e507012bc8b6>.

[19] "Googling…". *bound-to-non-functioning.* 24 March 2005. 15 July 2008: <http://bound-to-non-functioning.weblog.ro/2005-03-24/27839/Googling%E2%80%A6.html >.

[20] A classic Google search (sic) for the circulating variants *a gugla*, *a gugali* and *a googla* shows the users' preference for the former: 636 hits for **a gugla**, 436 hits for **a googla** and 354 hits for **a gugali**. Quite a flabbergasting linguistic future, if we consider the overoptimistic observations on the evolution of its concurrent peer – *a gugali* – as estimated by Romanian linguistics. Rodica Zafiu, "A gugăli". *România literară* 29 (28 July-3 August) 2004: 14.

[21] "Fetele din America (98)". *Despre copii.* 15 January 2008. 15 July 2008: <http://forum.desprecopii.com/forum//topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=113214&whichpage=19 >.



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The most productive prefixes in English and in Romanian, through massive loan translation from English into Romanian, can be recategorized as *internet prefixoids*[22] on solid grounds of their Latin and/or Greek origin but also global spread (DŞL 401), with their own linguistic identity in the source language, viz. English, as well as their constituency of use in the internet linguistic variety: e(lectronic)- (Latin *ēlectrum* "amber", Greek *ēlektron* "amber"), cyber- (Greek *kubernetes* "steerman"), hyper- (Greek *hyper* "over, beyond, overmuch, above measure")[23].

The first prefixoid in our ranking represents a special case of replacing a word-element *electronic* by its initial letter – an innovative word formation mechanism which has influenced the creation of compounds with similar prefixes, though not as productive, such as v(irtual)[24] in *v-chat* ("online chat"), *v-magazine* ("online magazine"), *v-chip* ("technology available for all television sets with picture screens 33 centimeters (13 inches) or larger that reads information encoded in the rated program and blocks programs from the set based upon the rating selected by the parent), *v-library* ("virtual library").

The e-prefixoid has generated a wide range of internet words and phrases that spread in nothing flat into common usage. Coinages such as *eext*, *e-zine*, *e-cash* or *e-money* were recorded in the 1997 edition of The Oxford Dictionary of New Words (Knowles 1997) – only to be followed a year later by even more formal acknowledgement: the American Dialect Society granted *E-* "Word of the Year"[25] as well as "Most Useful and Most Likely to Succeed". Other coinages include *e-tailing*/*e-tailers* ("electronic retailing"), *e-lance*/*e-lancer* ("electronic free-lance"), *e-therapy*/*e-therapist*, *e-management*/*e-managers*, *e-government*, *e-learning*, *e-book*, *e-conference*, *e-voting*, *e-loan*, *e-newsletter*, *e-card*, *e-pinion*, *e-shop*, *e-crap*, *e-security* etc.

The e-prefixoid word-forming potential has proved highly effective and became the most resourceful word formation mechanism in internet English at shorter notice than anyone could have predicted to such extent that other languages, which are highly technologically-dependent on English, could not have matched its prolific *electronic* enlargement. In Romanian, the e-prefixoid is not even second in order of priority of use for Romanian internauts, although an array of coinages does occur, hyphenated or not, mostly as domain names in Web addresses such as www.e-bani.ro, www.e-invatamant.ro, www.e-stiri.ro, www.e-guvernare.ro, www.e-piata.ro, www.e-carti.net, www.ecomunicate.ro, www.e-credit.ro, www.e-ziare.ro, www.eprimarii.ro, www.e-felicitari.net, www.e-scoala.ro, www.e-catalog.ro, www.e-referate.ro, www.e-pariuri.ro, www.edemocratie.ro, www.e-dragoste.ro, www.ecumparaturi.ro. Few well-established English prefix-formed coinages have been adopted in Romanian as loan translations (which can be explained by the reversed AA

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[22] Or *pseudoprefixes*, word-forming elements of Latin or Greek origin, whereby they function as separate lexical units (nouns, pronouns, verbs) Dimitrescu 154. Also recognized as such, viz. *prefixoids*, sixty years ago by the renowned Romanian linguist Iorgu Iordan in Limba română actuală. O gramatică a greşelilor, 2nd ed., Bucureşti: 1948.

[23] Online Etymology Dictionary 2001

[24] It qualifies for a prefixoid due to its Latin origin *virtualis* <*virtus* "virtue"; however its use is not as extensive in compounds both in English and in Romanian.

[25] High frequency in usage redefined its linguistic status and imposed it already as a separate lexical unit, hence "Word of the Year" instead of "Prefix / Prefixoid of the Year".



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model: adapt-adopt): *e-comerț*, *e-marketing*. In spite of sporadic use of independent e-prefix compounds in common vocabulary[26], the legion of such occurrences within the domain names represents peremptory evidence for their acknowledgement in the eye of the Romanian-native speakers.

The etymological evolution of the internet prefixoids has come full circle, in the sense that the cyber-, hyper- and e-prefixoids entered usage as raw translations from English into Romanian, in their original lexical independency as separate lexical units that do not make essential contribution to any compound. Collocations with *electronic* as an adjective such as the following are commonplace in the internet linguistic variety in Romanian: *bani electronici* (e-cash), *terapie electronică* (e-therapy), *comerț electronic* (e-commerce), *vot electronic* (e-voting), *mesaj electronic* (e-message), *cărți electronice* (e-books), bibliotecă electronică (e-library), but *magazin virtual*, a semi-lexical calque from the English e-shop, *galerie virtuală* (v-gallery). Both e-prefix and v-prefix, which stand for electronic and virtual in English, are thus used interchangeably in Romanian in adjective form. The latest dictionary of new words (MDN 2002) in Romanian, however, does not record any meaning extension for either adjective, electronic or virtual, which were nonetheless already included in the fifth edition of Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English (2005), with the second and the third meaning added respectively, herein below underlined:

> virtual • adjective 1 almost as described, but not completely or according to strict definition. 2 Computing not physically existing as such but made by software to appear to do so. 3 Optics relating to the points at which rays would meet if produced backwards.
>
> electronic • adjective 1 having components such as microchips and transistors that control and direct electric currents. 2 relating to electrons or electronics. 3 relating to or carried out by means of a computer or other electronic device: *electronic shopping*.[27]

Similar occurrences can be recorded for the electronic prefixoids cyber- and hyper- in a wide range of neological compounds in English: *cybercafé, cyberchat, cybercrime, cyberculture, cyberspace, cyberterrorism, , cybersex, cyberattack, cyberchurch, cybergirl, cyberknight, cyberlibrarian, cybermarketing, cybermedicine, cybercitizen, cyberlaw, cyberlawyer, cyberlife, cyberjournal, cyberinfrastructure* etc.; *hypertext, hyperlink, hyperfiction, hyperzine* (PM<hyper + magazine), *hyperthreading*. Due to their neological character, many of them not yet officially recorded but acknowledged in use and in computer technological online dictionaries, such compounds have a distinctive variable orthography, with or without hyphen and/or as separate words.

The same variation occurs in Romanian, where a surprisingly proliferation of loan translations occur as in *ciber-relație, ciber-criminali, ciber-spațiu, ciber-marketing, ciber-*

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[26] Also as an individual coinage, semi-calqued from the English e-prefix forming compound and with unusual blend between the noun and the possessive: *e-bancamea*.

[27] Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English, 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Also available online. 28 June 2008 < http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/electronic?view=uk >; < http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/virtual?view=uk >.



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*olimpiada, ciber-iubit(ă), ciber prietenie, ciber haiduc, ciber-conştiinţă, ciber-terorism*. The popularity in use of the internet prefixoid *ciber* in Romanian is thus formally acknowledged in the emergence of individual coinages by Romanian-native internet users such *ciber-comod* (adj, *Ne aşteaptă un viitor ciber-comod-* Ziarul finaciar online edition: 14 April 2004) or *ciber-maidanezi* (n., masc.- Cronica română online edition: 17 January 2006). Alongside with Romanian-adopted loan translations, there are fewer and fewer adapted occurrences – a reminiscent of English-only Web content availability such as *cyber-ucigaşi, cyber-infractori, cyber-războ*i.

Other prefixes have resulted in recurrent new compound words in internet English:

- *mouse-* in mouseclick, mousepad, mouseover;
- *click-* in click-and-buy, one-click, cost-per-click, double-click, click-and-mortar (an e-commerce strategy, as a mirror form of *bricks-and-mortar*);
- *web-* in webcam, webcast, webmail, webliography, webmaster, webonomics, webzine, webhead;
- *net-* in netlag, netdead, netnews, hypernet, netscape, Usenet, Netspeak, a long list of organization names including EcoNet, PeaceNet. (Crystal 2004:77)

A special case of language play refers to the increasing prefixal function of the graphic symbol @, which universally separates the user's login name from the domain name, in compounds such as atcommand, atsign, @-party, @-address, @Home, where the preposition "at" in the name of numerous organizations, events, other cultural manifestations have been replaced by the graphical symbol @ that resulted in an array of fresh electronically-inspired coinages.

Ray Tomlinson - whose name is linked to the history of e-mail as its inventor in the late 1971 - chose the symbol @ to tell which user was "at" what computer: "I scanned the keyboard for a sign that wouldn't appear on anyone's name, and couldn't therefore create any confusion".[28] With a linguistic eye on the cultural history of the symbol @, Tomlinson's arbitrary choice can be accounted for if we apply to the principles of cross-linguistic denomination (Malt et al. 2003), in particular names that happened to be bestowed on objects by a manufacturer either from within that culture or from outside for marketing purposes. In our case, as argued above, denomination was enabled by the absence of meaning for the symbol @ in electronic usage. Consequently, the original meaning "for a given amount per", which was already commonplace in the English-speaking world, mostly use by the English-speaking grocers and accountants, was easily transferable to "in a specified electronic location", which seem natural to English native speakers- all in the name of virtual utilitarism. In contrast, no historical linguistic existence was recorded in the case of the graphical symbol @, which was calqued after the English "at"- Ro. "la"- and preferred in use to the metaphoric denomination "coadă de maimuță".

Characteristic of the internet linguistic variety are also a small number of suffixes such as *-ware* in *firmware, groupware, shareware, shovelware, wetware* ("brain"), *-bot* (to indicate an artificial intelligence program, in contracted form from *robot*, which may be acknowledged as an electronic sufixoid*)* in *annoybot, chatterbot, knowbot, cancelbot, softbot,*

[28] August 2007:< http://www.mediahistory.umn.edu/indextext/@_sign.html >.



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*mailbot, spybot* and *–icon* only in *emoticon* and *assicon* but with a promising productive potential in the future (Crystal 2006:88).

High frequency in coinages is expected in the internet linguistic variety, in particular at the level of lexical suffixes which are extended to promote refreshing lexical formation. Conventional noun-forming suffixes such as *–ity, - itude, -full, -ification* have been revisited in the name of language play, a predominant internet language idiosyncrasy. Such instances include *dubiosity*, which has been adapted into the Romanian language, building on the concurrent existence of the adjective *dubios* (of Latin origin) in Romanian and calquing after the English coinage, Ro. *dubiozitate* in *Urmeaza doua texte de-o dubiozitate de-a dreptul exponentiala*[29]; obviosity, winnitude, hackitude, geekitude; foldefull, windowfull, screenfull, bufferfull; hackification, geekification. Traditional constructs occur in the most unexpected context of the internet linguistic variety such as the Anglo-Saxon grammatical affix for plural *-en* for words ending in *-x*, which produces electronic coinages such as *boxen*, *vaxen* ("VAX components"), *matrixen, bixen* ("users of BIX, an information exchange system") .

The internet suffix .com, hence the internet orthography with a period instead of a hyphen[30], represents one of the several domain names to indicate the organization an electronic address belongs to. It has developed into a common phrase Dotcom or Dot.com or Dot-com, which appears ubiquitously in written language in other varieties such as advertising and newspapers, as a general adjective or a noun, viz. a dot-com company and a dot-com (Crystal 1998, 2006). In Romanian, calqued forms are frequently used, mostly without hyphen, such as *dotcom-ul, dotcomul, dotcomuri* in *Este adevărat, economia şi poporul american s-au confruntat cu două crize majore: spargera balonului de săpun constituit de dotcomuri care a ruinat pe mulţi şi evenimentele din 11 septembrie.*[31]

Other blends, whereby elements are fused from two words, normally the beginning of the former and the end of the latter and whose meanings share or combine the meanings of the source words, with high frequency in the internet linguistic variety both in English and Romanian, include *netiquette, infonet* (derived from *information), cybercide* ("killing of a persona in a virtual-world game"), *datagram, infobahn, Bugzilla* ("a bug-tracking agency").

Word-class conversion is another resourceful word formation mechanism, usually from noun to verb form such as En. Google → to google, Ro. Google → a googla, a gugla, a gugăli, En. click → to click, Ro. clic → a clica, and in English-only mouse → to mouse, clipboard → to clickboard, 404 error → to 404 ("to be unable to find a page"). Also in Romanian, an example of language creativity is represented by the plastic conversion from the adjective class to the noun class as in *lungile* in such a collocation as *lungile de marţi*, which at the discourse level relates to the genre of brief, "a condensation or an abstract of a larger document or series of documents".

Word of language revitalization has spread around @ [*sic*] the speed of thought: we cannot ignore the impact of technology on language, in general and on individual language

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[29] Dric I - Pop[& StraNge] A Review. *Dbrom.* 2002. 15 July 2008: <http://www.dbrom.ro/articles.html?secid=7&artid=150 >

[30] When dot.com is written with a period, the punctuation mark is never spoken aloud.

[31] Cristian Banu. "Războiul bolnavilor". *Părerea mea.*Blog Entry. 10 June 2005. 15 July 2008: <http://www.cristianbanu.ro/index.php?itemid=117 >.



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use, in particular. Romanian as a less widely-used language sits at the crossroad between the new electronic medium and the influence of the English language, the linguistic glue that holds this new electronic world together today, the former being highly dependent on the latter, although the technical constraints work indeed in both directions. From the marriage of the speech-like features and the writing-like features witnessed by the set of technologically-mediated properties – a new linguistic variety was born, the internet linguistic variety, such as internet English and internet Romanian. The strongest argument in favour of internet English and in extenso internet Romanian is the cohort of new words that have forced their way into mainstream lexicography. Due to its cross-linguistic flexibility, the adapt/adopt model we explored can be applied to other languages as well and thus extend the research field for further analysis beyond the dominion of English, our Romanian examples being explanatory. In the context of language collision, the explosion of novel lexical units that constitute the class of internet neologisms in Romanian has thus proved more resourceful and beneficial than many would contend, within a refreshing approach to traditional word formation processes, in the name of two concurrent internet principles: virtual utilitarism and language ludism. Time will tell which or whether any will have an enduring impact on language in the end.

| **English** | **Romanian** | **English** | **Romanian** | **English** | **Romanian** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| address | adresă | find | găsire | refresh | reîmprospătare |
| back | înapoi | folder | folder | remove | eliminare |
| background | fundal | font, fonts | font, fonturi | reset | reinițializare |
| browse | răsfoire | format | format | restart | repornire |
| cancel | revocare | forward | redirecționare | restore | restabilire |
| check out | verificare la ieșire | go | salt | save | salvare |
| clear | golire | go back | salt înapoi | search | căutare |
| clear all | golire totală | go forward | salt înainte | select | selectare |
| close | închidere | help | ajutor | send | expediere |
| contact | persoană de contact | hide | ascundere | show | afișare |
| copy | copiere | home | la început | stop | oprire |
| customize | particularizare | ignore | ignorare | undo | anulare |
| delete | ștergere | insert | inserare | update | actualizare |
| demote | retrogradare | join | unire | view | vizualizare |
| disconnect | deconectare | link | legătură | | |
| edit | editare | loose | spațiat | | |
| exit | ieșire | move | mutare | | |
| file | fișier | open | deschidere | | |
| | | paste | lipire | | |

**Table 1**. English-Romanian Abridged Glossary of Microsoft Basic Commands

| **English** | **Romanian** |
|---|---|
| access | acces |
| account | cont |
| address | adresă |
| add a contact | adaugă (persoană de)contact |
| alert | (avertizare) notificare |



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| | |
|---|---|
| appear offline | (apariție offline) arată-mă neconectat |
| background | fundal |
| check box | (casetă de selectare) casetă de bifare |
| feed | flux |
| give us feedback | (furnizați-ne feedback) spuneți-vă părerea |
| offline | (offline) neconectat |
| online | (online) conectat |
| sign in | (face sign in) conectare |
| sign out | (face sign out) deconectare |

**Table 2**. Ready-to-use English-Romanian Microsoft Basic Commands (Adapted from Microsoft Computer Terminology Forum)

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