# USE AND ABUSE OF BORROWINGS IN THE ROMANIAN PRINT MEDIA

ANABELLA-GLORIA NICULESCU-GORPIN[1]

**Abstract.** This article addresses the case of English borrowings that have come to be widely used in the Romanian print media during the last two decades. More specifically, it analyses the way in which Romanian journalists use and abuse English borrowings when they write original articles or articles based on English originals and/or translations thereof. I will try to see whether some of their lexical choices are determined by relevance, whether the processing effort and other factors such as recency or frequency of use may trigger the presence of such words or whether they are only signs of the writers' lack of adequate knowledge of Romanian and English.

**Keywords:** English borrowings, Romanian, relevance theory.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The influence of the English language and Anglo-American culture is so obvious in present-day Romanian that linguists could not ignore the topic for too long. However, most of the specialist studies published so far (Avram 1997, Hristea 1995, Sala-Rădulescu 2007, Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2001, 2005, 2006, Zafiu 2002) have rarely gone beyond a descriptive and normative approach, and have mainly confined themselves to recording language facts. The language level most frequently studied has been the lexicon since it seems to be the most affected, with an abundance of English borrowings permeating the language – with or without good reason. Most of these studies are mainly normative, as they have suggested ways in which these words could be adapted phonetically or morphologically to Romanian, and have sometimes even proposed solutions for standardisation.

Section 2 of this article examines several important points discussed by Romanian linguists concerning the presence of English lexical borrowings in present-day Romanian and ends with a brief analysis of the theoretical framework I have espoused, i.e. relevance theory.

In my analysis I will attempt to go beyond the descriptive level, perform an in-depth exploration of these language phenomena, and formulate relevance-based explanations for their existence and behaviour.

[1] Romanian Academy, the "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti" Institute of Linguistics, anabellaniculescu@hotmail.com.

This presentation is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/89/1.5/S/59758.

RRL, **LIX**, *1*, p. 91–102, Bucureşti, 2014

**BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)**

The analysis in Section 3 considers several examples taken from both translation-based and original articles from several Romanian daily newspapers (such as the Ro. *buildinguri* for En. *buildings*, Ro. *trenduri* for En. *trends*, Ro. *cash* for En. *cash*, etc., words that do have a perfectly good Romanian equivalent), it compares a translation-based article with the original to see whether the English borrowings are taken over directly from the English original or they were added by the Romanian authors, and shows that there are cases when relevance and relevance-based factors may underlie the presence of these words, but also cases when these factors seem to be less important, or not important at all.

The conclusions discussed in Section 4 suggest that there may be a continuum of cases between use and abuse of English borrowings in present-day Romanian and that relevance considerations could explain such a phenomenon.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. *Romgleza*. Current Trends

There are two main trends detectable in the Romanian academia regarding the English influence on present-day Romanian.

First, there are those who have been actively advocating the purity of Romanian, trying to find ways to suppress any English influence. Copying the well-known *franglais* (see Étiemble 1964, Thody, Evans & Pepratx-Evans 1995), the staunch defenders of the Romanian language, such as Eugen Simion, member of the Romanian Academy or the late professor George Pruteanu, have used recurrently the term *romgleză (*sometimes *rongleză)* to refer to the current mixture of Romanian and English used especially (but not exclusively) in the public sphere, i.e. in the print and electronic media.

Second, there are those, some of them linguists, who tend to take this phenomenon with a pinch of salt: they tend to tolerate the occurrences of English borrowings in present-day Romanian, and are more interested in finding ways to normalise and standardise new words. For example, Mioara Avram (1997: 9) states that: 'The influence of the English language is not a negative phenomenon in itself and is no more dangerous than other foreign influences that have had an impact on our language … Considering the great hospitality of Romanian, doubled by its ability to assimilate and integrate borrowings even at the level of allophones, it is logical to assume that Romanian will be able to get over *Anglicisation* … as it has got over Slavonification, Hellenisation, Russification, Italianisation or Frenchification, to only mention a few of the linguistic influences that have affected Romanian over time.' [translation mine, AGNG].

The research tendency has been to record and count the occurrences of English borrowings in Romanian, to see whether they are indeed necessary (that is, if they are borrowed in order to fill lexical gaps) or they are merely 'trendy', to define the register that is more prone to such borrowings (economics, advertising, fashion, politics, etc.) or to propose various means of standardisation of these borrowings where they are indeed necessary in the Romanian language.

Stoichițoiu-Ichim (2006) analyses whether the use of *romgleză* is determined by personal choices or whether it is a direct effect of globalisation. Her research seems to suggest that globalisation is a fertile field which offers the perfect environment for the

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

assimilation of various English words and structures in Romanian, while allowing individual speakers or groups to choose whether they are ready to adopt new lexical items or not. Without going into too many details, Stoichițoiu-Ichim argues that there are several socio- and psycholinguistic factors that may trigger these choices, but she only mentions one such factor, i.e. that members of some groups (such as experts in a particular scientific domain – economists, doctors, etc.) use English borrowings as a means to emphasise their group membership. These users make no distinction between really necessary vs. gratuitous loan words. For them, anything goes as long as the language community understands the message.

The obvious conclusion, therefore, is that there may be no escape and the influence will continue. Without taking sides, I claim that this influence has its benefits in that it will enrich the Romanian vocabulary, while *trendy* loan words will disappear if not sanctioned by use.

On the other hand, little has been said in the literature about the psychological reasons behind this phenomenon, about the language processing factors that may determine such a massive import of English words. Before actually examining such factors, I will briefly present the main tenets of relevance theory, on which I have based my analysis.

### 2.2. Relevance Theory

According to relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995, 2006, Wilson 2003, Wilson & Sperber 2004, Niculescu-Gorpin 2010) communication is ostensive and the presence of ostensive stimuli triggers the audience's attention; these stimuli bring about predictable expectations of relevance. Moreover, verbal communication is inferential, in that hearers have to recognise the fact that speakers intend to affect their cognitive environment and also to recognise that they have this intention.

Initially a theory dedicated to the understanding of utterance interpretation, relevance theory considers human cognition in general, and formulates two main tenets.

Humans tend to maximise the relevance of the input they process, and this is due to the way in which human cognition has evolved. This assumption is expressed in the First or Cognitive Principle of Relevance:

"Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance" (Wilson & Sperber 2004:5).

When it comes to verbal communication, what really matters is the Second, or the Communicative Principle of Relevance "Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 7), and the Presumption of Optimal Relevance:

"An ostensive stimulus is optimally relevant to an audience iff: (a) It is relevant enough to be worth the audience's processing effort; (b) It is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences" (Wilson & Sperber 2004:7).

Revisiting the Presumption of Optimal Relevance, the second clause, one may conclude that speakers' choices do influence the relevance of an utterance and that whatever the audience gets carries an imprint of the abilities and preferences of the interlocutor. It is true that there might be cases when such choices are consciously made, i.e. speakers carefully choose their words to produce a particular effect in their audience (think for example about the way in which political or advertising speeches are construed),

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

but most of the time there are other factors that make speakers choose a particular word or expression or a particular syntactic structure. These factors, although directly linked with the processing effort, i.e. with the way in which hearers tend to process the message put forth, also influence speakers' choices.

These factors are: recency of use, frequency of use, linguistic complexity, logical complexity, accessibility and the size of the context.

Recent use of particular words, syntactic constructions or even of contextual assumptions will trigger less processing effort. Frequency of use may decrease the processing effort as well. Thus, if a particular sound, word, (syntactic) construction or contextual assumption is frequently employed in conversation, writing, etc., less effort will be required to process it. Such words will thus be more activated in the speakers'/hearers' minds, who will tend to use them when they create new utterances.

As its name shows, the third factor defines aspects related mostly to the linguistic complexity of utterances. Thus, a message containing too many compound words or too many subordinate clauses will be more difficult to process. This factor matters less from the speakers' perspective, but one would expect speakers to try not to burden their audience unless they think that in so doing they will obtain some worthwhile effects.

When it comes to logical complexity, experimental work emphasises the fact that negative expressions such as ***not, impossible, doubt*** cause more processing difficulties than corresponding positive expressions (e.g. ***possible, believe***). The last two factors, accessibility and size of context affect the processing effort of any inputs, and they will be considered briefly in the section dedicated to the analysis proper.

Although these factors influence message processing and understanding, I will argue that they may underlie the use of English loan words in Romanian print media, and thus also message formulation.

## 3. USE AND ABUSE OF BORROWINGS IN THE ROMANIAN PRINT MEDIA

Wondering whether the use of English borrowings in the Romanian print media is indeed necessary, or whether journalists should pay more attention when they choose the words are issues that pertain more to a normative approach. Nevertheless, my purpose is different: I will attempt to see whether there are psychological factors that may sanction the use of these borrowings. In Niculescu-Gorpin (2010) I analysed several examples of English borrowings taken from Romanian advertisements and concluded that there was a continuum of cases that ranged between pure dilettantism to purposeful occurrences whose aim was to manipulate/persuade current and future customers.

In what follows I will embark on a qualitative, rather than a quantitative analysis, as I am more interested in the reasons underlying the use or abuse of English loan words in Romanian print media than in their frequency. More specifically, I will analyse several examples taken from one original and one translation-based article from Romanian dailies.

My hypothesis is that, since relevance is a cognitive principle, and it has a part to play in all our actions, it may be helpful in explaining the abundance of English loan words in the Romanian print media. As stated in the previous section, considerations of relevance may underlie some Romanian journalists' (unconscious) choice of English words, as the presence of such items may be triggered by factors determining a low processing effort.

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

Therefore, the focus of my research is more on the writers' end, on the reasons why they may choose to use a particular word and not another. On the receivers' end, however, based on the same factors that influence the processing effort, the use of these words could be either a help or a burden for comprehension.

The first examples are taken from a narrative-descriptive article found in *Evenimentul zilei*, a Romanian daily newspaper. The article, entitled Ro. *Reportaj dintr-o țară normală la cap* (En. *Reportage from a mentally sane country*) is dedicated to Belgium and it tries to present this European country through a traveller's eyes. It seems meant to attract tourists, but also to remove some misconceptions. The article in Romanian can be found at: http://www.evz.ro/detalii/stiri/reportaj-dintr-o-tara-normala-la-cap-891380.html.

Several English borrowings, not too many however, can be identified in this text. The first is the English word *business, which* appears in the quotation below:

> „Și da, faptul că găzduiește cele mai importante instituții ale Parlamentului European a ridicat și orașul, altfel pesemne anonim, la cote turistice și de *bussines* impresionante." [Italics mine, AGNG]
> "Hosting the most important institutions of the European Parliament, Brussels, the otherwise anonymous city, has become an impressive tourist and business hub". [Translation mine, AGNG[2]]

Even if I am not interested in correcting the content mistakes the journalist made, I must however signal the fact that the European Parliament is an unique institution, therefore Brussels cannot host the most important institution of the European Parliament, but only the most important institutions of the European Union, among them the European Parliament.

Let me just mention that the misspelling of the word *business* belongs to the author of the Romanian article. Apart from that, the obvious question is: why has the writer chosen to use *business*, and not a Romanian word, such as Ro. *afacere/afaceri*, Ro. *mediu de afaceri*.

The occurrence of *business* here cannot be determined by a lack of knowledge of English and/or Romanian as both the English borrowing and the Romanian word (also a calque, but an old one from French) are well known to Romanian speakers, as they are not specialist terms. I claim that considerations of frequency and recency of use are at stake here. The word *business* has already been recorded in Romanian dictionaries, such as the *Dictionary of Neologisms* (DN), in 1986 as Ro. '*Business s.n. Afacere dubioasă, necinstită',* En. *Fishy, dirty business* [translation mine, AGNG] and in the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language* (DEX) in 1998 where it was defined as Ro. '*Business, businessuri, s.n. (Englezism)* ***1.*** *Afacere.* ***2.*** *Ocupație, muncă. [Pr.: bíznis] – Din engl. business*.', En. '*(Anglicism) 1. Business. 2. Job, work*,' [translation mine, AGNG]. Later the term was also taken over by other dictionaries.

It may be argued that this word is extremely frequent nowadays and has a high degree of recency of use in Romanian and thus it is highly activated in the minds of the audience and the writer. Linguistic complexity may also play a part in the writer's

[2] The translations of the Romanian examples are not word-for-word translations as my intention was to render the meaning, not to provide material for a morpho-syntactic analysis of the Romanian text.

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

(unconscious) choice: *business* is used as a noun, it is preceded by the preposition Ro. *de* (En. *of)*, it acts as a determiner for Ro. *nivele* (En. *levels*), and it is coordinated with the adjective Ro. *turistice* (En. *touristic*). The best choice, in my opinion, would have been the adjective Ro. *economice* (En. *economic*), and thus the text would have been Ro. *la nivele turistice și economice impresionante* (En. to *impressive touristic and economic levels*). Due to linguistic and logical complexity and to syntactic factors, it would have been almost impossible to intercalate Ro. *afacere* (En. *business*) in this noun phrase and still make it easy to process, for the following reasons: the adjective *impresionante* (here feminine, plural) would have been too far away from the head. More specifically, the structure would have been Ro. *nivele economice și de afaceri impresionante*, making the structure ambiguous, in that it would be difficult to know whether the adjective *impresionante* determined the noun *nivele* or *afaceri*, as both would take the form *impresionante* as a determiner, as it agrees in number and gender with both of them. The disambiguation would be facilitated by the fact that the noun Ro. *nivele* (En. *levels*) needs a determiner to make sense – one needs to specify what kind of levels, *impressive* in this case. So actually the adjective determines the head *nivele.* Although dictionaries mention a rarely used Romanian plural *businessuri*, the use of the singular *business* in this text avoids any ambiguity. The use of Ro. *business* is determined by factors linked to the processing effort – its presence lowers both the writer's and the audience's processing effort.

Another English borrowing whose occurrence may be explained along the same lines is Ro. *cash* (En. *cash*) used in:

> "Cu o cartelă magnetică de zece călătorii – aproximativ 12 euro – pe care o puteți cumpăra de la orice automat de pe stradă (cu *cash* sau card bancar) vă puteți urca în autobuze sau metrou." [Italics mine, AGNG]
> "Using a 10-trip magnetic card that costs around 12 euros and can be purchased from any ticket machine in the street (paying cash or by bank card) you can get on any bus or the subway". [Translation mine, AGNG]

The English *cash* has entered Romanian recently, and it was recorded in *Dictionary of Recent Words*, second edition ($DCR_2$) and illustrated by a quotation from a 1990 newspaper. Now it is listed in most dictionaries as an invariable, *singularia tantum* noun and adjective and as an adverb. Again, the same factors linked to the processing effort may explain its use here: *cash* is so highly activated in the minds of Romanian speakers, it has come to be so much a part of the Romanian language that even people who do not know English will have no problem in understanding it. If the author had decided to use another synonym, let's say Ro. *cu numerar* (En. *with cash*), it could be that the processing effort would have increased (for both the writer and the audience) because this is a technical phrase that is not very frequently used in common language. The analysis of these two examples suggests that the use of Ro. *business* and Ro. *cash* is sanctioned by factors that determine the processing effort and that it may satisfy both clauses of Optimal Relevance, i.e. these words are 'relevant enough to be worth the audience's processing effort' and are 'the most relevant one[s] compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences." (Wilson & Sperber 2004:7, insertion mine, AGNG).

Another interesting case is that of Ro. *building-uri* (En. *buildings*) found in the fragment below:

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

> "Centrul oraşului poate fi bătut cu piciorul, plimbare care vă permite să admiraţi *clădiri* vechi, flamande, păstrate într-o perfectă stare şi reflectate în sticla *building-urilor* moderne". [Italics mine, AGNG]
> "You can walk around the city centre, admiring old, perfectly preserved Flemish buildings, mirrored in the windows of new modern buildings/constructions". [Translation mine, AGNG]

*Building-uri* is not an English borrowing that people tend to use a lot in Romanian. It was recorded in DN in 1986 and defined as Ro. *Clădire modernă de mari dimensiuni* (En. *big, modern building*) or in $DCR_2$ as Ro. *zgârie-nori, clădire foarte înaltă* (En. *sky-scraper, very tall building*).

Although the word Ro. *building* appears in dictionaries, its meaning is not part of the communal lexicon (Clark 1996, 1998) – most Romanian speakers would only know that En. *building* is Ro. *clădire*, but would not automatically associate the Ro. *building* with modern, sky-scraper-like constructions (and neither have I!).

My hypothesis is that the writer of the article has not used Ro. *buildinguri* by chance. The writer obviously wanted to create an antithesis between Ro. *clădirile vechi* (En. *old buildings*) and new buildings, and she thought it was appropriate to mark this difference lexically. The word is morphologically adapted to Romanian, i.e. it has a plural form created according to the plural formation rules of neuter nouns in Romanian. Moreover, one has to consider the author's own background: she is a freelance journalist, who has spent some time abroad, so she has been in extensive contact with the English language and with Romanian journalese which abounds in English borrowings. Words such as *building* – whether interpreted according to the English and/or Romanian meaning – may be highly activated in her mind due to recent and frequent use. Thus, it may be argued that her choice is geared by relevance and it observes the second clause of Optimal Relevance: the use of Ro. *buildinguri* is the most relevant one compatible with her abilities and preferences.

Would the use of this word abuse the reader? There is no definite Yes/No answer to this question. For those speakers who have no clue about what *building* means in English or have never heard it used in Romanian (I wonder if there are such people, but there must be some!), the use of this particular word would probably trigger a greater processing effort because Ro. *buildinguri* is neither frequently nor recently used in their cognitive environment. And thus the linguistic structure may turn out to be too complicated for them to process. For speakers who are familiar with the meaning of *building* (either the English or the Romanian word), the processing effort would probably be the same.

There is yet another question that should at least be spelled out. Does the use of Ro. *building-uri* really trigger greater cognitive effects than the use of the demonstrative pronoun Ro. *celor* (En. those)? If the writer had chosen this word, the sentence would have been Ro. *... vă permite să admiraţi* ***clădiri*** *vechi, flamande, păstrate într-o perfectă stare şi reflectate în sticla* ***celor/clădirilor*** *moderne* (En. "it allows you to admire old, Flemish buildings, preserved in perfect condition, that are mirrored in the glass of new, modern ones/buildings", translation mine, AGNG). My intuition is that at least for some readers there might be some differences regarding the cognitive effects when it comes to understanding the two variants, so the extra processing effort is worth it. Nevertheless, for most people no extra cognitive effects would be triggered by such uses since not many people would be aware of the possible antithesis existing between Ro. *clădire* and Ro. *building*.

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

The examples analysed above have been taken from an original Romanian text. A complete analysis of the text has revealed that it contains no other lexical borrowings from English. The writer's use of such words may be sanctioned by factors that influence and are geared by considerations of relevance.

Let me now briefly analyse a few examples from a translation-based Romanian articles taken from *Capital* (the online edition). I must emphasize here that Romanian journalese represents the most striking token of the abusive use of English borrowings in present-day Romanian.

*Capital* is an economic Romanian newspaper that includes a section entitled *The Economist* where one can find articles translated from or based on articles taken from the famous magazine. I will briefly analyse the article *Adevăratul motiv pentru care femeile nu ajung în fruntea companiilor* (http://www.capital.ro/detalii-articole/stiri/171182.html) with the English version *The real reason why more women don't rise to the top of companies* (http://www.economist.com/node/21560856).

The articles in this section of *Capital* are pretty good translations, at least better than most other articles published in the Romanian media.

I will discuss the English borrowings used in this article. The first one is *CEO* combined with *manager* as found in

> "În iulie, gigantul IT Yahoo!, aflat acum la ananghie, a anunțat numirea în funcția de *CEO* a Marissei Mayer (37 de ani, fost *manager* în cadrul Google), deși aceasta va naște în octombrie; in the original: "In July Yahoo!, a struggling internet firm, picked a 37-year-old from Google, Marissa Mayer, who is expecting a baby in October, as its new boss). [italics mine, AGNG]

*CEO* (chief executive officer or chief operating officer) and *manager* (that occurs several times in the Romanian article) do not even appear in the original. It is extremely interesting that the Romanian translator introduces two English borrowings in the target-text, one of them with an extremely low frequency, i.e. *CEO.* Only a handful of Romanians would probably know that *CEO* refers to the head of a big company, but even fewer would know what the initials stand for. On the other hand *manager* is on anybody's lips: Ro. *director* is no longer in use as if it were a derogatory term or not trendy enough. There are no additional cognitive effects the presence of *CEO* may trigger. In fact, my intuition is that its mere presence actually impairs the processing as readers would probably stop and try to figure out what *CEO* means, and since it is in close vicinity to *manager* they will probably think it was not a manager, but something different, a kind of special boss.

Just a few lines on, one finds Ro./En. *middle management* in:

> "femeile ocupă doar 28% din posturile de *middle management*" (En. there are only 28% women in middle management).

What is really amazing is that the original states that women '*occupy only 28% of senior managerial posts'*. So, *senior managerial posts*, which definitely refer to top positions in a company, have become *middle management* posts in Romanian. The Romanian translator introduces gratuitously an English borrowing and manages to distort the meaning. Moreover, *CEO* crops up again to translate 'chief-executive roles'.

A few lines on the Romanian reader finds *board-urile* in *board-urile marilor companii* (in the original *boards*), where *-urile* is the Romanian morphological marker of neuter plural *-uri* combined with the enclitic definite article *-le*. If the kind reader thought

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

there was no Romanian word for *board*, I hope he or she is pleased to find out that there is at least one that could fit very well the structure above, i.e. *consiliu de conducere* or simply *conducere*[3] (En. *board*), and thus the phrase could have been *la conducerea marilor companii.* The occurrence of *board* here can be explained by considerations of relevance – for example, that the word was highly activated in the translator's mind due to its recency of use – but such explanations, though psychologically plausible, do not excuse the translator for unnecessarily burdening his audience by requiring them to put in some additional processing effort. It is the duty of the translator to make sure he/she observes at least the basic rules of the target language, and a simple rule would be to use words belonging to that language.

And since the article talks about economy, Ro. *business* had to show up again:

> "Femeile să poată accede pe căi „naturale" către conducerea mediului de *business*" (En. women to naturally reach leading positions in business); in the original: "It would be better if women could rise naturally to senior executive roles rather than being forced onto boards". [Italics mine, AGNG]

So, here the translator uses Ro. *conducerea mediului de business* for En. senior executive roles. Yet again, he introduces *mediului de business* which is a strange mixture made up from *mediul de afaceri* (as shown above, the correct Romanian phrase) and *business*. Since Ro. *business* is so frequently and recently used in present Romanian, there is no doubt that the translator did not even realise that he used it (but this is no excuse), but thankfully, the same factors – frequency and recency of use – would ease the reader's processing effort.

*PR* is the next borrowing one has to discover. Yet, my intuition is that only a Romanian linguist in search for English borrowings would stumble upon it. Though En. *Public Relations* has a Romanian equivalent *Relații publice*, nobody uses RP, so the presence of *PR* is explained by its frequent use and it complicates neither the structure nor the processing effort.

Moving on, we meet Ro. *deadline-uri* (pun intended!) again with the neuter plural ending *-uri.* It should be noted that most English nouns that are borrowed in Romanian tend to fall into the class of neuter nouns. The word does exist in the original so it must have been highly activated in the translator's mind due to its recent use. The Ro. *termen* or the more pleonastic phrase *termen limită* are extremely seldom used in present Romanian being replaced by the more fashionable *deadline*. Even non-speakers of English are using *business*, *deadline* and other English borrowings with an ease that would make Romanian linguists wonder whether they are really recent borrowings or not.

The last paragraph contains two more English borrowings: Ro. *inspirațional* (En. *inspirational*) and *burn-out*. The former does not appear in the original: *Ms Mayer of Yahoo! is an inspiration to many* could be translated into Romanian as *Mayer (de la Yahoo!) este o sursă de inspirație pentru mulți*, where the noun *inspiration* would be translated by its Romanian equivalent *inspirație.* Instead, the translator chose *un model inspirațional* (En. *an inspirational model*) that sounds extremely odd in Romanian and increases the processing effort unnecessarily. *Burn-out* appears between inverted commas both in the original and in the Romanian version:

[3] *Conducere* has more than one meaning, but for the purpose of my analysis only this meaning will be retained.

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

"spune cu orice ocazie că sindromul de „*burn-out*" (*oboseala excesivă, cu repercusiuni fizice și psihice - n.a.*) este un pretext al leneșilor."; in the original: 'She believes that "burn-out" is for wimps.' [Italics mine, AGNG]

The Romanian translator provides a full explanation of the concept between brackets, so one would wonder why he did not simply use Ro. *oboseală excesivă* and gave up the English noun. Nevertheless, if no other Romanian journalist used this expression before (which is not the case), we could have been faced with the birth of a new word in present day Romanian!

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

I began this article wondering whether Romanian journalists use or abuse English borrowings in their articles and whether such uses could be explained by considerations of relevance.

After briefly presenting the current situation of English borrowings in Romanian, emphasising that their overwhelming presence is felt as an acute problem by many – linguists or not, I presented the main tenets of relevance theory and discussed the factors that may affect the processing effort. The analysis proper has focused on two articles: one original and one translation-based.

My analysis suggests that, no matter how much one would want to claim that Romanian journalists *use* English borrowings to better express an idea or concept, in fact they *abuse* them.

There are several English borrowings in the original article analysed. Some may be unconsciously used, maybe due to their high frequency and recency in present-day Romanian or to the fact that the journalist (like many other Romanians) is constantly in contact with English, or both. However, my claim is that words such as Ro. *building-uri* are used on purpose to attract the readers' attention and, in this particular context, to create an antithesis between old and modern constructions. If such uses are indeed supported by the cognitive effects they would bring once they are processed is still debateable, as it may very much depend on each individual's expectations of relevance. Nevertheless, my claim is that in the case of *building-uri* there might be some real gain for (at least some) readers.

Several English borrowings are also present in the *Economist*-based article. One would expect to see transfers from the original to the target article – though a good journalist/translator should pay attention to his work and remove any such infelicitous occurrences. However, my analysis has shown that besides such borrowings the translator/journalist infused the outcome with other English borrowings that did not even occur in the original! Although psychological factors such as high accessibility as well as frequency and recency of use could explain why the translator used these words, they provide no good excuse. The outcome is unintelligible, the readers' processing effort is gratuitously increased and the relevance of the message is seriously impaired. Poor readers, they are not only faced with an abundance of English borrowings from the original, they must also accept the translator's lack of consideration towards the outcome of his own work! Faced with such an abusive use of borrowings, the Romanian reader has two main options: to give up reading and processing the article completely or to try to process the message and see if there are any cognitive effects worth the trouble.

BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

My analysis does suggest that the reasons that affect the processing effort and thus the relevance of the message have a considerable influence when writing such articles, but journalists/writers should first of all consider their audience: they should be ready to increase their own processing effort attempting to make their messages more relevant for the audience.

It can be thus concluded that, from the writer's perspective, the presence of English words in Romanian texts is triggered by considerations of relevance and they are directly linked to the second clause of Optimal Relevance; from the reader's perspective, the question is whether these words are indeed 'relevant enough to be worth the audience's processing effort' (the first clause of Optimal Relevance). And last, but not least, journalists should write their articles with this question always highly activated in their minds.

## REFERENCES


Avram, M., 1997, *Anglicismele în limba română actuală*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.

Bolinger, D., 1980, *Language, the loaded weapon: the use and abuse of language today*, New York, Longman.

Clark, H. H., 1996, *Using language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Clark, H. H., 1998, "Communal lexicons", in: K. Malmkjaer, J. Williams (eds), *Context in language learning and language understanding*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 63−87.

Étiemble, R., 1964, *Parlez-vous franglais?*, Paris, Gallimard.

*Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române* (DEX), 1998, Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan", ediţia a II-a, Bucureşti, Univers Enciclopedic.

Dimitrescu, F., 1997, *Dicţionar de cuvinte recente* ($DCR_2$), ediţia a II-a, Bucureşti, Editura Logos.

Hristea, Theodor, 1995, "Ortografia şi ortoepia neologismelor româneşti (cu specială referire la împrumuturile recente)", *Limbă şi literatură*, 2, 36−53.

Marcu, F., C. Maneca, 1986, *Dicţionar de neologisme* (DN), Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.

Niculescu-Gorpin, A.-G., 2007, *Relevance and the perlocutionary effect: the case of the 2004 US and Romanian presidential debates*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester.

Niculescu-Gorpin, A.-G., 2010, "Anglicismele între diletantism şi manipulare", in: N. Saramandu *et al.* (eds.): *Lucrările celui de-al treilea Simpozion internaţional de lingvistică,* ediţia a III-a, Institutul de Lingvistică Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti, 20-21 noiembrie, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 559−569.

Niculescu-Gorpin, A.-G., 2013, *Influenţe cultural-lingvistive asupra evoluţiei recente a limbii române în context european şi mondial*, Bucureşti, Editura Muzeului Naţional al Literaturii Române.

Sala-Rădulescu, M., 2007, "Despre adaptarea unor anglicisme în limba română", *Studii şi cercetări lingvistice*, LVIII, 1, 175−185.

Sperber, D., D. Wilson, 1986, *Relevance: communication and cognition*, Oxford, Blackwell, and Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press. Second Edition, 1995 (with preface), Oxford, Blackwell.

Sperber, D., D. Wilson, 2006, "A deflationary account of metaphor", *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 18, 171−203. Revised version in: R. Gibbs (ed.), *Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 84−105.

Stoichiţoiu-Ichim, A., 2001, *Vocabularul limbii române actuale: dinamică, influenţe, creativitate*, Bucureşti, Editura ALL.

Stoichiţoiu-Ichim, A., 2005, *Vocabularul limbii române actuale*, Bucureşti, Editura All.


BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)

Stoichițoiu-Ichim, A., 2006, *Aspecte ale influenței engleze în româna actuală*, București, Editura Universități din București.
Thody, P. M. W, H. Evans, M. Pepratx-Evans, 1995*, Le Franglais: Forbidden English, forbidden American: law, politics, and language in contemporary France: a study in loan words and national identity*, London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, Athlone.
Wilson, D., 2003, "Relevance Theory and lexical pragmatics", *Italian Journal of Linguistics/Rivista di Linguistica* 15, 273−291.
Wilson, D., D. Sperber, 2004, "Relevance Theory", in: E. Ward, L. Horns (eds), *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, Blackwell, 607−632 (here from www.dan.sperber.com).
Zafiu, R., 2002, "Anglicismele în Europa", *România literară*, 37, 18-24 septembrie.

**BDD-A426 © 2014 Editura Academiei**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:00:17 UTC)**